



Chairman Oberstar: Bridge Money "Will Absolutely Be There"

On Monday, August 2, Chairman Rep. James Oberstar (Minnesota) toured the Cincinnati and Northern Kentucky Brent Spence Bridge at the request of U.S. Rep. Steve Driehaus of Cincinnati. Oberstar chairs the powerful House Transportation & Infrastructure Committee, and will play a major role in writing the multi-year SAFE-TEA-LU reauthorization bill.

Oberstar said that the hundreds of millions of federal dollars needed to begin work on a new Brent Spence Bridge "will absolutely be there", perhaps as soon as late this year (2010). Calling the existing Brent Spence "one of the most important and one of the most congested" bridges in America, Oberstar said he is confident that the first "sizeable installment" on the project will be included in a major transportation bill he hopes to push through Congress after the November election.

"If we don't rebuild this bridge, we know that goods will take longer and cost more to reach their destinations, and millions of drivers and businesses will be inconvenienced. This project is something that simply must happen," Oberstar said.

When Oberstar was a graduate student at Georgetown University in Washington, D.C., he worked an early morning shift in the House of Representatives post office. One of his "customers" he got to know was a Congressman from Kentucky. It was Brent Spence. "This particular project has a national significance, but it also has a little personal touch for me," he concluded.

Oberstar didn't comment on the equally urgent need for the Louisville Bridges Project or the I-69 Bridge near Henderson and Owensboro during his Cincinnati/Northern Kentucky visit.

Kentucky U.S. Congressman Brett Guthrie (Bowling Green) is the only member of the Kentucky House delegation serving on the Transportation & Infrastructure Committee.

Change Your E-Mail Address For KBT!

Effective last week, KBT has new e-mail addresses, so please make a change in your computer contact list to reflect that change!

KBT President Stan Lampe can now be contacted at stan@kbt.net. The old e-mail address, which should be discarded was stankbt@msn.com. KBT's new Executive Assistant, Pam Helton, can be reached at pam@kbt.net. The KBT website address remains unchanged. It is: www.kbt.net

States To Washington: Toll Interstates

States are pressing Washington to change federal rules that limit state government's ability to toll interstate highways. "In the last two or three months, there's been a real surge of interest in this topic," says David Hartgen, a transportation policy consultant at the University of North Carolina – Charlotte.

In states all across the nation, elected public officials are quickly coming to the realization that planning, designing and building interstates was the easy part. According to Peter Samuel, the editor of a newsletter on tolling, TollRoadsNews.com, there are literally dozens of requests pending before FHWA to toll sections of interstates.

The traditional main source of road funding – federal and state gasoline taxes – has eroded as motorists drive more fuel efficient vehicles. Even more alarming is the arrival of alternative fuel vehicles, using electricity, natural gas, or hydrogen as their fuel source, and paying no taxes to

drive on the transportation network. While some of these vehicles are still on the drawing board, others are actually on the assembly line right now and will be for sale on your local car dealer's lot this fall.

States seeking a change in federal rules to toll interstates include: Maryland, Indiana, Illinois, North Carolina, Alabama, and Virginia.

The challenge for State Transportation Cabinets, in all 50 states, is a complex one. In nearly every state in the nation, interstates only account for 1% to 2% of their total miles of roads. However, the vehicle miles traveled on interstates is generally 25% to 30% in each state. In Kentucky, for example, we have some 71,000 miles of state, county and municipal roads and streets, but only 740 miles of interstate.

U.S. Senate Now Set To Recess; House Will Be Called Back

In a surprise move this week, the U.S. Senate stayed in session an extra week to pass a \$26 billion measure that will help save the jobs of firefighters, police and other public employees, including teachers. The bill passed on a nearly party-line vote of 61-39 last evening, Thursday, and now goes back to the House where Speaker Pelosi said she would call the House back into session next week to approve the legislation. President Obama is expected to sign the bill next week as well, before school opens in mid-August.

This jobs package has been significantly reduced from the ambitious "green" jobs bill circulating earlier in June and July. The earlier bill provided funds to support "green jobs", provide new funds for streets, roads and bridges, as well as other water/sewer infrastructure projects. The previous bill also called for funding of summer jobs programs for disadvantaged youth and a renewal of the health insurance subsidies for jobless Americans using their COBRA benefit. This new bill contains NONE of those features.

In the new bill, \$16 billion is earmarked to states to help pay their Medicaid bills. Kentucky was expecting a \$ 238 million in additional funding for Medicaid, but with this new version of the bill it's unclear how much the state will receive. The remaining \$10 billion in aid to school districts is expected to prevent the layoff of some 300,000 teachers nationwide.

"Fancy Farm" This Weekend - Watch It from Your Home!

Every year since the early 1880's or 1890's, St. Jerome Catholic Church has sponsored a picnic on the church grounds near Mayfield in Graves County. Literally thousands of pounds of pork and mutton barbeque are served along with heaping helpings of political speeches, buttons, and bumper stickers.

This year, if you think it's too hot to travel to Graves County in Western Kentucky, watch KET's live television coverage, beginning at 2:30 p.m. (Eastern) and 1:30 p.m. (Central) tomorrow, Saturday, August 7. A 2 ½ hour program, hosted by KET's Bill Goodman and Renee Shaw, will feature commentary from political observers, including former Governor Wendell H. Ford.

In the past decade, the Fancy Farm stump speeches have met increasing heckling and verbal abuse from those in attendance. KBT hopes that Fancy Farm 2010 will return to a more civil and gentele atmosphere. The serious and complex issues facing our state and nation require that we begin a thoughtful conversation in search of real solutions. It's KBT's view that constructive ideas don't pop up when people are shouting at each other....

Kentucky Economic Indicators: Encouraging Trend

On Monday, the Office of the State Budget Director in Frankfort issued its Kentucky Economic Indicators data for April. For the third consecutive month, the leading indicators increased by 6.6%. Components of the leading index were: Ky. labor index, up 9.9%; U.S. retail sales increased by 3.9%; U.S. Manufacturer's new orders increased by 16.0%, and the Louisville help wanted index remained unchanged.

The report also noted that Ky. non-farm employment increased by 7.8% and U.S. personal income

increased by 6.7% during the report period. This is an encouraging trend!

Interim Transportation Committee to Meet Tuesday, Aug. 10

The Joint Interim Transportation Committee will be held Tuesday, August 10. The meeting will convene at 10:00 a.m. in Room 154 of the Capitol Annex Building in Frankfort. The Capitol Annex is located directly behind the State Capitol.

There are four interesting items on the Interim Committee agenda. There will be an update on the Road Fund bonding program, followed by a discussion of the removal of ice storm debris from 2009. Then the UK Transportation Center will make a presentation on their current activities, and the final agenda item will be a Revenue Cabinet presentation on how the \$25 million trade-in credit allowance program will be concluded when it hits the "cap" of \$25 million.

KBT members are encouraged to attend these important Interim Committee meetings.

Kentuckians for Better Transportation

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