

Rahall Statement on Republican Surface Transportation “Proposal”

Nov 17, 2011

Washington, D.C. – U.S. Representative Nick J. Rahall (D-WV), top Democrat on the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, today held a press conference after House Speaker John Boehner (R-OH) and Chairman John Mica (R-FL) unveiled the House Republican ‘proposal’ for a long-term surface transportation reauthorization. Below are Rahall’s remarks, as prepared for delivery:

“Today, House Republicans announced a plan short on details but long on expectations to reauthorize our surface transportation programs. It is hard to take a ‘plan’ that contains few details seriously, but optimistically it appears the tides have turned and Republicans have come around from their previous attempts to slash the transportation budget by one third, which would have destroyed more than 600,000 American jobs in the first year alone.

“If Republicans were serious about creating jobs, they would have crafted a package that can garner bipartisan support, as our Committee has traditionally done, and quickly pass so we can get workers back on the clock right away. Instead, they have chosen to play politics with the paychecks of construction crews with a proposal that contains vague promises that new energy exploration will magically create the money needed to fix our crumbling roads, bridges, and transit systems.

“Nothing in today’s announcement identifies real, sustainable revenues needed to address our long-term surface transportation infrastructure investment needs. Having both served on and chaired the Natural Resource Committee for many years, I have witnessed countless efforts to expand domestic energy production. I have been through the “Drill, Baby, Drill” cycles. Unfortunately, many of the proposals offered today have been around for decades, and – more importantly – will generate nowhere near the amount of revenue in the near term promised by the Republicans.

“It is Speaker Boehner’s birthday today, but it sounds like Big Oil is going to get all of the gifts. While Big Oil is hearing “Drill for Highways, Baby, Drill” from the Republicans today, states and unemployed construction workers will literally be hearing “Wait, Baby, Wait”.

“Bipartisanship has been the bedrock of the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure for decades. It is tragic that Republicans have failed to reach across the aisle and work with Democrats to develop a bipartisan approach to address the unprecedented infrastructure needs our Nation is facing. It is time to get serious about rebuilding America. Democrats are committed to moving a long-term surface transportation bill that meets this goal, but this proposal is hard to take seriously.

“It is in this bipartisan spirit that I hope Republicans and Democrats can once again come together to do the right thing for the economy.”