

Washington, DC -- U.S. Rep. Vern Buchanan urged House appropriators to provide Florida with additional transportation funds authorized by the federal highway bill. Florida would lose more than \$250 million under a Democrat plan to pass a huge stopgap spending measure next week to fund most government programs through Sept. 30. Buchanan joined a bipartisan group of members of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee in sending a letter to the House Appropriations Committee urging them to provide an additional \$4 billion in highway and transit funds authorized by the "Safe, Accountable, Flexible, and Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU)."

"Next week, the House is scheduled to vote on legislation that would give Florida more than \$250 million less than Congress promised when it passed the 2005 reauthorization of federal highway and transit programs. That's unacceptable," Buchanan said. "As a member of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, I believe it is imperative that leaders in the House provide highway and transit funds as authorized by law."

In their letter, House Transportation Committee members wrote, "SAFETEA-LU is essential to meeting out nation's surface transportation infrastructure needs, which are reaching crisis proportions. Congestion has worsened dramatically in recent years. In 2003, traffic congestion cost motorists \$63 billion in terms of time and fuel. In addition, more than 43,000 people were killed on our nation's highways in 2005 and many of those fatalities were due to substandard road conditions and roadside hazards.

"In addition to meeting infrastructure investment needs and lessening the burden congestion imposes on our economy, the SAFETEA-LU funding is critically important to our nation's job creation. Cutting the SAFETEA-LU highway and transit funding will cost 192,000 family-wage construction jobs."

The letter notes that surface transportation programs differ from other federal programs because they are funded by federal gas taxes paid in to the Federal Highway Trust Fund.

"Given the unique nature of the Highway Trust Fund programs, the CR (Continuing Resolution) can provide this guaranteed [fiscal] 2007 funding without impacting other programs that must be funded under the discretionary budget authority cap set by last year's budget resolution," the letter states.

It is estimated that Florida would lose \$253.35 million in transportation funding. Good-paying jobs are also at stake. According to the American Road & Transportation Builders Association (ARTBA), Florida stands to lose 6,776 jobs.