

(Washington, DC) — U.S. Congressman Jason Altmire (PA-04) today brought the Chairman of the House Transportation Committee, Congressman James Oberstar (MN-08), to western Pennsylvania to highlight the region's transportation and infrastructure needs ahead of next year's Highway Reauthorization Bill.

As the only western Pennsylvanian on the House's Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, Congressman Altmire will play a key role in shaping this legislation, which lays out federal transit and infrastructure funding priorities for the next five years.

Congressman Altmire held a press conference with Congressman Mike Doyle (PA-14), Allegheny Chief Executive Dan Onorato, Mayor Luke Ravenstahl and local experts to highlight local needs for the Chairman Oberstar and to show him how vital western Pennsylvania's infrastructure is to the local economy.

"I brought Chairman Oberstar to western Pennsylvania today to give him a first-hand view of our region's transportation and infrastructure needs," Altmire said. **"Western Pennsylvania has more bridges, in worse condition, than any other region of comparable size. The Highway Reauthorization Bill will be a crucial funding vehicle for the projects we need to undertake to provide our region with the infrastructure it will need to compete domestically and internationally in 10, 15, 20 years."**

Western Pennsylvania's transportation infrastructure is in dire need of sustained investment. Locks and dams along local rivers are crumbling, many roads are filled with potholes and hundreds of bridges have been identified as structurally deficient. Indeed, out of the 1,795 state-owned bridges in Allegheny, Beaver and Lawrence Counties, 577 are structurally deficient.

"While we are making progress addressing the backlog of highway and bridge needs in western Pennsylvania, significant needs remain unfunded," H. Daniel Cessna, District Executive for PENNDOT District 11 said.

"Additional resources would make an immediate and visible impact."

The Highway Authorization Bill is reauthorized every five years and is the main funding vehicle

for highway, transit, airport and rail projects nationwide. The last authorization, the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act - A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU), authorized \$9 billion for Pennsylvania and is set to expire on September 30, 2009.

“From its earliest days, transportation has been critical to Pennsylvania’s growth and economic health. The Commonwealth has also faced its share of transportation challenges. The Governor’s own task force recently identified \$1.7 billion in highway, bridge, and transit needs,” Chairman Oberstar said. **“As we move to reauthorize our Federal surface transportation programs over the next 18 months, Congress will look to join our partners in Pennsylvania and the other states, to meet, and overcome, those challenges.”**

Bringing Chairman Oberstar to western Pennsylvania is the latest in a series of steps Congressman Altmire has taken to improve regional infrastructure. As part of last year’s budget, Congressman Altmire secured nearly \$50 million for highway construction, mass transit, and locks and dams infrastructure improvements on the Ohio River, including \$750,000 for improvements to Freedom Crider Road to better access between Beaver County and Cranberry Township and \$750,000 for safety upgrades along the I-376 Corridor at the Route 60 and 422 Interchange in Union Township.