

2010

Highway Users Alliance

Max S. Baucus

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Senator * or Department*: **BAUCUS**

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(1) Subject*: **Transportation**

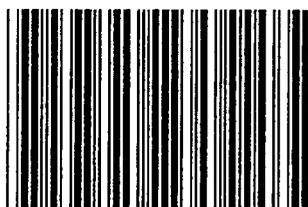
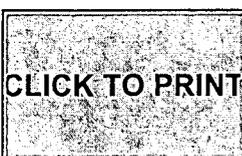
(select subject from controlled vocabulary, if your office has one)

(2) Subject* **Speech to the Highway Users Alliance Members**

DOCUMENT DATE*:

(Example: 01/12/1966)

* "required information"



BAUCUS

Speech to AHUA

Thanks, *Greg*, for that kind introduction. And thank you to the Highway Users Alliance members for having me here before you today.

Obviously, you and I share a major concern: what is going to happen with the Highway Bill?

I do know that you are worried that we may not get a Highway Bill in the near future.

And, I know you're worried that the kind of Highway Bill that ultimately gets enacted may be one that you're not crazy about. There are a lot of proposals that favor using Highway Trust Fund money for non-highway uses.

And, I also know that you are concerned that any Climate Change legislation will raise the price at the pump, while robbing the Highway Trust Fund of any future growth.

Let me tell you simply that I share your concerns, and I have some of my own.

I am concerned about proposals that primarily favor urban interests – to the possible detriment of rural interests like we have in my state of Montana.

I am also concerned about the condition of the Highway Trust Fund.

The Highway Trust Fund provides two key benefits.

First, it enables the federal government to to provide the states with multi-year funding guarantees on which they can set their budgets.

Second, it ensures that we actually have funding set aside for roads, bridges, and transit. Otherwise, the highway program gets reduced to having to

compete with defense, health care, education, energy and other priorities for annual federal spending.

If you think our road network has shortcomings now, just imagine what it would be like if we didn't have the Highway Trust Fund.

But, the truth is that we can't afford the program on which we currently rely. Over the past two years, we have had to transfer about \$35 billion dollars into the Highway Trust Fund in order to continue to meet our guaranteed obligations to the states.

That makes it hard to write a bill that increases funding.

At this point, the Highway Bill has fallen victim two things:

- **One is that we are a point in this country where we take for granted having modern, safe roads and**

bridges. We don't like having to pay to maintain a good network.

- **Two is the public concern with spending. I think some of that concern is based on a lack of faith that the federal government can get it right.**

Like you, I firmly believe we need to do a good, robust bill to address the real needs we have in this country.

You know many of the statistics, but here are two of the most basic ones:

First, over the last 20 years, the number of vehicle miles traveled on U.S. roads has nearly doubled while the number of lane miles has increased only about four percent.

Second, the U.S. population will grow by at least 120 million people over the next 50 years.

We have to have a public discussion on what kind of transportation opportunities do we want as Americans. As a nation, are going to have to figure out our priorities for transportation as we work through this Highway Bill. If we want a safe, modern network for moving people and goods in order to have economic growth, we are going to have to find a way to pay for it.

That public discussion, and the impetus to get a good bill signed into law, is going to have to come from outside the Beltway.

You have a very diverse group here, spanning manufacturers, truckers, farmers and other rural interests, construction interests, and others. You have the collective strength to make a difference. But you will have to seize the initiative.

Many Americans are worried about the deficit and the debt. And, members of Congress are attuned to the vocal opposition against federal spending that they are hearing.