Keystone Coalition Endorses Transportation Funding Plan

HARRISBURG, Pa., Aug. 1, 2011 /PRNewswire/ -- The Keystone Transportation Funding Coalition, representing a diverse group of organizations and individuals with an interest in a sound transportation system, today urged Gov. Tom Corbett to adopt and endorse the recommendations of his Transportation Funding Advisory Commission. The commission delivered its report to the governor today.

"The commission's recommendations represent the closest we've come to a comprehensive transportation funding solution in decades," said George Wolff, Harrisburg lobbyist and coalition founder. "We hope the governor and Pennsylvania legislators will see, through our coalition, that there is strong, widespread and diverse support for this plan."

The coalition is a confederation of organizations with an interest in multimodal transportation funding, who came together to support a comprehensive solution to Pennsylvania's transportation funding needs. Members include the highway construction industry, public transit agencies, labor unions, AARP, bicycle and pedestrian use on roadways and trails, land-use advocates, air and seaport organizations, organizations representing local governments, chambers of commerce, travel and tourism organizations, environmental advocates, health care providers, advocates for people with disabilities, freight and passenger rail organizations and truck freight haulers (a list of coalition members is appended).

"The commission's recommendations include substantial benefits for all of the coalition's member groups and their constituencies," Wolff said. "The plan, if accepted by the governor and adopted by the General Assembly, will make a major difference in terms of improving safety, relieving traffic congestion, boosting the economy immediately by creating jobs, providing for future economic growth and, generally speaking, enhancing the quality of life for all 12 million Pennsylvanians."

Wolff noted that the recommendations would cost an average motorist only 70 cents per week in the first year, increasing to about $2.50 per week – less than the cost of a gallon of gas – by the fifth year. He pointed out that in addition to inflation-adjusting increases in license and registration fees, recalibrating the Oil Company Franchise Tax to reflect today's wholesale oil prices would enable the state to also collect revenue from those who do not live here, but who use the state's transportation assets.

Several other coalition members joined Wolff in expressing support for the plan.

"The report of the Governor's Transportation Funding Advisory Commission is an outstanding piece of work and a great starting point for the General Assembly and stakeholders to craft
legislation and policy," said David W. Patti, president and CEO of the Pennsylvania Business Council. "While we may not agree with every recommendation in the report, we believe the work as a whole is a critical and valuable first step toward long-lasting and meaningful funding solutions."

"AARP supports a comprehensive funding plan, and is particularly interested in adequate funding for shared-ride and other public transit services that provide mobility for older Pennsylvanians," said Desiree Hung, AARP associate state director-advocacy. "Without those kinds of services, older residents often have difficulty keeping doctor's appointments, buying groceries and with other day-to-day activities. This is particularly true for people who no longer drive, and especially in rural areas."

"A safe, reliable transportation network is vital to a strong economy and provides a key competitive advantage for attracting and retaining businesses and growing jobs," said Rob Wonderling, president & CEO of the Greater Philadelphia Chamber of Commerce. "The Commonwealth must address the challenges facing our highways, roads, bridges, and transit systems to improve mobility and ensure continued economic development."

"A safe and reliable transportation infrastructure is critical to the tourism industry," said Robert Fulton, president of the Pennsylvania Association of Convention and Visitors Bureaus. "A total of 85% of Pennsylvanians visitors come by car, bus and train. Tourism relies on our transportation system to get the millions of visitors each year here safely."

"10,000 Friends pursues state policies to keep our existing communities vibrant and economically healthy, and transportation infrastructure is the lifeblood of our communities and an essential means of facilitating commerce," said Jack Machek, president and CEO of 10,000 Friends of Pennsylvania. He noted that the organization supports the idea of fixing existing infrastructure first, and has created a program called the Pennsylvania Community Transportation Initiative, aimed at encouraging investment in high value, community-driven projects linked to efficient land use.

"Legislators have long tried to tackle the transportation funding problem – without success," said Bernard Dagenais, president and chief executive officer of the Main Line Chamber of Commerce, which serves 1,100 businesses primarily in Montgomery, Delaware and Chester counties in southeastern Pennsylvania. "Unlike other issues that draw debate, there’s no question that government has to fund infrastructure needs. If enacted, this plan helps the governor and General Assembly to fulfill their responsibilities to the citizens and businesses of Pennsylvania."

"The Dirt & Gravel Roads Maintenance Program has made significant strides in the past fourteen years of its existence in mitigating sediment transport to waters of the Commonwealth," said Barry E. Sheetz, director of the Center for Dirt & Gravel Road Studies at Penn State. "Its activities have contributed to improvements in the Chesapeake Bay and Pennsylvania is recognized for its sediment reduction contributions based upon the activities of the Dirt & Gravel Roads Program. The program looks forward to an infusion of additional assistance in its activities especially in light of the significant impacts that gas exploration and drilling are having on the Commonwealth's rural infrastructure."

**Keystone Transportation Funding Coalition members**
Keystone Coalition Endorses Transportation Funding Plan -- HARRISBURG, Pa., Aug. 1... Page 3 of 4

Bicycle Coalition of Greater Philadelphia
Central Atlantic Bridge Associates
Glenn O. Hawbaker, Inc.
Greater Philadelphia Chamber of Commerce
Greater Pa. Carpenters Union
League of American Bicycles
The Main Line Chamber of Commerce
Malady & Wooten
McCormick Taylor
Michael Baker Inc
New Enterprise Stone & Lime
Northeast Prestressed
Pa. Aggregates and Concrete Association
Pa. Assn. of Convention and Visitors bureau
Pa. Asphalt Pavement Association
Pa. Business Council
Pa. Industry for Blind & Handicapped
Pa. Motor Truck Association
Pa. Public Transit Association
Pa. Society of Professional Engineers
Pa. Association of Township Supervisors
Pa. Turnpike Commission
Pa. Walks and bikes
PENNJERDEL Council
Pennoni Associates Inc.
Penn State University Center for Dirt and Gravel Road studies
Philadelphia Regional Port Authority
Pittsburgh Port Authority
Red Rose Transit