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New Six-Year Transportation Bill Should Be Centerpiece of President's Call for Infrastructure Investment, says ACEC

WASHINGTON, DC – The best response to President Obama's State of the Union call for infrastructure investment is for Congress to finalize a long-stalled multiyear bill to reauthorize the nation's surface transportation programs, said David Raymond, president of the American Council of Engineering Companies.

In his speech, the President acknowledged the deteriorating shape of the nation's infrastructure. "Our infrastructure used to be the best, but our lead has slipped," Obama said. "We have to do better . . . we've begun rebuilding for the 21st century. And tonight, I'm proposing that we redouble those efforts."

Raymond said that "Robust investment in transportation infrastructure should be the centerpiece of any recovery agenda. Its critical connection to job creation and economic viability can not be overstated." He added that it was "encouraging to now see all of the major players – the House, Senate, and the White House – all agreeing that we need to take action on a multi-year surface transportation bill. The challenge now is how to adequately fund the measure in the face of the government cost-cutting mindset."

Years of inadequate transportation funding has resulted in a nation increasingly plagued with congested roads, deficient bridges and overburdened transit systems. Budget forecasts show a \$44 billion projected deficit between current spending levels and revenues flowing into the Highway Trust Fund—the primary funding source for transportation improvements. Two separate commissions created by Congress also confirmed the significant gap between current revenues and what is necessary to maintain and improve our surface transportation systems.

Raymond noted that every \$1 billion in spending on infrastructure supports over 34,000 jobs. Each dollar invested in highway construction generates \$1.80 of GDP in the short term.

"We are extremely pleased the President embraced this fact in his address, and we encourage the White House and Congress to move quickly to make passage of a six-year, surface transportation bill a priority in 2011," he said.

The American Council of Engineering Companies (ACEC) is the business association of America's engineering industry. Council members numbering more than 5,000 firms and representing more than 500,000 employees throughout the nation are engaged in the development of America's transportation, water and energy infrastructure, as well as environmental, industrial and other public and private facilities. Founded in 1909 and headquartered in Washington, D.C., ACEC is a national federation of 51 state and regional organizations.