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Tragedy Brings Hope: Minnesota I-35 Bridge Replacement Set to Open Ahead of Schedule and On Budget, New River Crossing Shows What America Can Do

Minneapolis, Minnesota (September 15, 2008) – The replacement of the I-35 bridge spanning the Mississippi River in Minneapolis-St. Paul, which collapsed August 1st last year killing 13 people, is set to open – safely, ahead of schedule and on budget.

More than 250 Minnesota LIUNA members worked to build the replacement bridge. It is expected to open this month – three months ahead of the scheduled December 24 opening date. LIUNA members were also on the bridge when it collapsed in 2007, some simply crossing the Mississippi River as millions do every day, while others were working on a repaving crew.

“The new I-35 bridge is a testament to the strength and resolve of America, our union and hundreds of proud LIUNA members and contractors,” said LIUNA General President Terry O’Sullivan. “From this tragedy, which shocked our nation, we have renewed our focus on taking care of the basics of America – our bridges, roadways, waterways and other fundamentals that working people depend on every day. We can build America so America works if we put our hearts, hands and minds to it.”

There were numerous warnings about the I-35 bridge dating to the 1990s, but even after its deadly collapse there remain today more than 150,000 bridges across America in need of repair. Overall, the American Society of Civil Engineers gives our nation’s fundamentals – such as our highways, bridges, waterways and energy systems – a “D” grade and estimates that the investment needed to bring the country back to acceptable condition is \$1.6 trillion and rising because of inflation and continuing deterioration.

In addition to avoiding unnecessary tragedies, building America leaves behind a stronger, safer nation and creates good family-supporting jobs that stimulate the economy. A U.S. Department of Transportation study concludes that 47,500 jobs are created for every \$1 billion invested.

“While the I-35 bridge collapse was a grisly reminder of tragedies that happen when we wait too long to take care of the basics, the new I-35 bridge demonstrates the positive impact building America can have on the economy and local community,” said O’Sullivan.

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The members of LIUNA – the Laborers’ International Union of North America – are on the forefront of the construction industry, a powerhouse of 10 million workers who are proud to build America.

LIUNA’s Build America, so America Works is a long-term effort to make taking care of America’s highways, bridges, dams, schoolhouses, energy systems and other basics a national priority. Go to www.LiunaBuildsAmerica.org for details.