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"Getting Schooled in Infrastructure" Tour Begins; Highlights America's Failing Roads and Bridges and Critical Need for Congress to Pass a Long-Term, Full-Investment Highway Bill

Multi-State Tour Begins at Shuttered I-495 Bridge In Delaware, Continues for Six Weeks Through Nation's Heartland, Before Ending at U.S. Capitol

June 16, 2014 – The “Getting Schooled in Infrastructure” school bus tour kicked off today at the now-closed I-495 bridge in Wilmington, with a real school bus which has been crushed and carries a prop resembling a large piece of a fallen bridge. The bus will travel through more than 22 cities and Congressional districts.

The prop is part of a campaign by LIUNA – the Laborers’ International Union of North America – to press Congress to pass a long-term, full-investment Highway Bill this year. The campaign also includes radio ads, billboards, online activity and grassroots action.

“It’s time to stop sugar-coating this issue,” said LIUNA General President Terry O’Sullivan. “We are not trying to scare people, but we are trying to wake people and Congress up.”

If Congress does not act, the nation’s already failing roads and bridges will worsen.

Currently:

- One in four bridges is deficient or obsolete, according to the American Society of Civil Engineers. The average U.S. bridge is 46 years old, dangerously close to the average lifespan of 50 years. Without investment, more bridge failures are likely such as the high-profile ones that have occurred from the deadly Minneapolis bridge collapse to the I-5 collapse in Washington State to this month’s closure of the heavily-traveled I-495 Delaware bridge after it was observed tilting.



- Poor road conditions, such as potholes, are now a contributing factor in a third of traffic fatalities, equating to about 10,000 lost lives each year, according to the transportation research group, TRIP.

Last week, LIUNA released a national poll by Hart Research Associates, which uncovered the degree of concern most Americans have about their roads. About six in 10 say they worry about poor road conditions – 27% of them worrying often.

Four in 10 say they or someone they know has almost had an accident or lost control of their car due to poor road surfaces, and 28% say poor roads have caused an accident involving themselves or someone they know. And a striking 69% say poor roads cost them in wear and tear on their cars – a “pothole penalty” that equates to \$324 a year for the average driver, according to TRIP. Experiences and concerns are similar regardless of political party.

The Highway Bill authorizes resources to be dispersed to states for roads and bridges from the Highway Trust Fund. The fund provides the largest share of transportation investment for most states. The fund is expected to begin running dry in about a month. And without action by Congress, the fund will completely stop dispersing road and bridge funds on Oct. 1.

Money for the Highway Trust Fund comes from the federal gas tax. A key reason the fund is in crisis is because the 18.4 cent tax has not been adjusted for 21 years. Due rising construction materials costs and vehicle fuel efficiency, the tax has declined in value by 40 percent during those 21 years.

“Congress has multiple, viable options to consider,” O’Sullivan said. “But it is time to act. The most reliable, tested investment resource for our roads and bridges is the gas tax and adjusting it will give Americans what they want and need – safer roads and bridges in their states and communities.”

LIUNA has been joined by a broad group, including the 54-million-member AAA, the Chamber of Commerce, Building America’s Future, and others – in its call to adjust the gas tax.

Initial stops for the “Getting Schooled” bus following Wilmington are in Pennsylvania, including Philadelphia, Allentown, Chambersburg, Hollidaysburg, Altoona and Pittsburgh. Through the summer the bus is scheduled to travel several states, including Ohio, Michigan, Wisconsin, Indiana, Kentucky, Missouri, Virginia and Maryland, before ending in Washington, D.C.

In addition to the bus tour, LIUNA’s radio ads urging Congress to act were launched today in Pennsylvania, Ohio and Michigan, and billboards will continue to go up in each state ahead of deficient bridges or on deteriorating roadways.

Motorists and concerned citizens are directed to www.FixOurBridges.org and www.RepairOurRoads.org where they can learn more and easily send a message to their member of Congress.

LIUNA will also be urging its half-million members to reach out to Congress over the next several months.

“For LIUNA, passing a long-term, full-investment Highway Bill this year is about creating jobs – but it’s as much about making our roads and bridges safe,” O’Sullivan said. “Like most working people, we rely on them every day.”

Radio ads, billboards and other campaign materials can be found at www.FixOurBridges.org.

For updated information on the “Getting Schooled” tour, follow LIUNA on twitter @LIUNA.

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The half-million members of LIUNA – the Laborers’ International Union of North America – are on the forefront of the construction industry, a powerhouse of workers who are proud to build America. To see LIUNA’s new campaign for a long-term, full-investment Highway Bill, go to www.fixourbridges.org.