

NATIONAL STONE, SAND & GRAVEL ASSOCIATION



Natural building blocks for quality of life

July 15, 2008

The Honorable James Oberstar
Chairman
House Committee on Transportation & Infrastructure
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Oberstar:

On behalf of the National Stone, Sand & Gravel Association (NSSGA) I wish to commend you for your continued efforts to address the nation's bridge maintenance and repair problems so tragically highlighted by the Minnesota bridge collapse. NSSGA joins our coalition partners in supporting H.R. 3999, the "National Highway Bridge Reconstruction and Inspection Act."

A key part of the problem facing the nation's transportation system is that it is old with over half of the bridges built before 1964. Interstate bridges, which were primarily constructed in the 1960s, are at the end of their service lives (estimated to be 44 years for bridges built at that time). NSSGA supports the key goals of the legislation that establishes a risk-based priority for replacing bridges along the National Highway System and improving the bridge inspection program. This legislation will ultimately make travel safer and more efficient for all users as older bridges are upgraded to current safety standards and are rebuilt to accommodate increases traffic.

As you are aware, from 1990 to 2005, there has been a 19 percent increase in the nation's population, a 39 percent increase in vehicle miles traveled, but only a 4 percent increase in highway capacity. As you are also aware, a number of reports, including the National Surface Transportation Policy and Revenue Study Commission final report, detail the need for additional funding for the nation's infrastructure along with a suggestions for restructuring the Department of Transportation. H.R 3999 is a positive step forward in addressing the nation's aging surface transportation infrastructure.

According to the U.S. Geological Survey, NSSGA is the largest mining association by product volume in the world and represents the crushed stone, sand and gravel-or aggregate-industries. Our member companies produce more than 90 percent of the crushed stone and 70 percent of the sand and gravel consumed annually in the United States. More than three billion tons of aggregates (or 2.95 billion metric tons) were produced in 2007 at a value of approximately \$21 billion, contributing nearly \$38 billion to the GDP of the United States. Without these important

materials, the nation's infrastructure could not be built or maintained, and the commerce and quality of life would be severely reduced. The aggregates industry workforce is made up of about 118,000 men and women. Every \$1 million in aggregate sales creates 19.5 jobs, and every dollar of industry output returns \$1.58 to the economy. With over 11,000 operations nationwide, most Congressional Districts are home to multiple operations.

NSSGA looks forward to working with you and our coalition partners to advance the bridge initiative to improve the safety and stability of the nation's transportation infrastructure.

Sincerely,



Jennifer Joy Wilson
President & CEO

cc. The Honorable John Mica