



Natural building blocks for quality of life

March 22, 2006

The Honorable Joe Knollenberg
Chairman, Subcommittee on Transportation,
Treasury, and HUD
House Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman:

The House will soon debate the FY 2007 Budget Resolution. Of particular interest to the National Stone, Sand & Gravel Association (NSSGA) is funding of the nation's surface transportation program. Recently, talk of eliminating the funding "firewalls" that ensure that federal highway user fees are used for transportation purposes has resurfaced. NSSGA believes this would be unwise policy and opposes any such efforts.

NSSGA's member companies produce 90 of the crushed stone and more than 70 percent of the sand and gravel consumed annually in the U.S. Aggregates are the largest component of both asphalt and concrete. Nearly three billion metric tons of aggregates valued at approximately \$17.4 billion are estimated by the U.S. Geological Survey to have been sold in the U.S. in 2005. Without these important natural products, the nation's infrastructure could not be built or maintained, and commerce and the quality of life would be severely reduced. With more than 11,000 sites nationwide and a workforce of 117,000 men and women, most Congressional Districts are home to multiple aggregates operations.

As you are aware, the users of the nation's roads and highways pay an 18.4-cent per gallon gasoline user fee into the Highway Trust Fund (HTF) for maintenance and improvements to the federal highway system. As part of The Transportation Equity Act for the Twenty-First Century (TEA 21) Congress enacted special budgetary protections ensuring that federal gasoline taxes and other highway user fees were exclusively dedicated to improving the nation's surface transportation infrastructure and invested for this purpose in a timely fashion. In other words, TEA 21 put trust back into the trust fund.

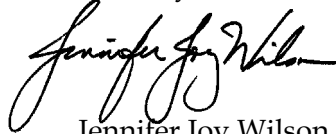
SAFETEA-LU (Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy For Users), the surface transportation reauthorization passed by Congress last year, continued the transportation budget firewalls of TEA 21. Without authorizing the use of all the funds in the Highway Trust Fund, Congress would have been unable to address the many requirements of our nation's surface transportation infrastructure, not the least of which is the formula for distributing highway funding to the states.

SAFETEA-LU took over two years and 12 extensions to pass and was the result of compromises by all interested parties. The funding firewalls were discussed by Congress during the reauthorization process and overwhelmingly continued. We disagree with those who would divert funds obtained from the use of the nation's roads and highways, critical to the country's economic vitality and competitiveness, to other national priorities. The funding of the surface transportation system is truly one where the user pays for the use of the system. To divert the gasoline user fee to non-transportation programs would subvert the trust of the people who believe this to be an essential user-fee program - their gas taxes are supposed to go for repair and improvement of our national highway system, as Congress re-recognized in 1998 by passing TEA 21 and the HTF budgetary protections.

While certain budget reforms and reordering of federal spending priorities may be warranted, we urge the continuation of the HTF budget firewalls. Please keep trust in the Highway Trust Fund.

Thank you in advance for your consideration of our views.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jennifer Joy Wilson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being the most prominent.

Jennifer Joy Wilson
President & CEO

Cc: The Honorable John Olver
Ranking Democrat
Subcommittee on Transportation,
Treasury and HUD