

Natural building blocks for quality of life

July 15, 2004

The Honorable Bill Frist
The Honorable Melissa Hart
The Honorable Bill Owens

Chairs of the Platform Committee
c/o The Republican National Committee
310 First Street, SE
Washington, D.C. 20003

Dear Platform Committee Chairs:

The National Stone, Sand and Gravel Association (NSSGA) would like to take this opportunity to comment on the party platform that you and your committee are drafting and submit the enclosed text for the plank on transportation.

NSSGA represents the crushed stone and gravel (aggregate) industries. Our member companies produce 90 percent of the crushed stone and 70 percent of the sand and gravel consumed annually in the United States. Construction aggregates are used primarily in asphalt and concrete. Ninety-four percent of asphalt pavement is aggregate; 80 percent of concrete is aggregate, whether pavement — “horizontal construction,” or “vertical construction” — buildings, dams, sewage treatment plants, and the like. About 10 tons of aggregates per person are used annually in America. Every mile of interstate contains 38,000 tons of aggregates; about 400 tons of aggregates are used in construction of the average home.

More than three billion tons of aggregates (or 2.66 billion metric tons) were produced in the U.S. in 2003 at a value of approximately \$14.4 billion, contributing \$37.5 billion to the Gross Domestic Product of America. Every \$1 million in aggregate sales creates 19.5 jobs, and every dollar of industry output returns \$1.58 to the economy. The aggregates industry workforce is made up of approximately 120,000 men and women.

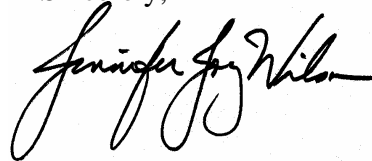
Reauthorization of our nation’s premier surface transportation bill is of utmost importance to NSSGA members and America. Besides defense, building and maintaining America’s infrastructure is a federal imperative and legitimate federal responsibility. America’s highway and transportation infrastructure is badly in need of upgrading. We must reauthorize TEA 21 or face increased congestion that already is costing our nation over \$67 billion annually. Also, too many lives are being lost due to unsafe roads and highways. We can’t allow this to continue.

Together, ISTEA and TEA 21 have begun to address the enormous job (estimated by the Federal Highway Administration to cost \$106.9 billion annually) of maintaining and improving our nation's highway system. The nation's highway system fuels economic growth; for every \$1 billion spent on highway construction, 47,500 jobs are generated each year. Every dollar invested in the highway system yields \$2.60 in economic benefits to the nation.

America's population has grown by more than 30% over the past 30 years, the number of vehicles registered in America has risen by 75%, and the increase in miles traveled has increased by 125%, but road capacity has only increased by 6% during the same time period. Further, a quarter of America's bridges are being used beyond their design life and are in critical need of replacement or repair.

Growth and preservation of our nation's transportation infrastructure should be a national priority. Accordingly, we urge inclusion of a plank in the party platform addressing this national imperative and have included a draft for your use. Please do not hesitate to contact us with any questions that you may have.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Jennifer Joy Wilson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jennifer Joy Wilson
President & CEO

SUGGESTED TEXT FOR THE PLATFORM COMMITTEE TO CONSIDER FOR TRANSPORTATION PLANK:

Commerce is the lifeblood of our nation's economy, and America's transportation infrastructure, built with aggregates, is its circulatory system. The network of roads and transportation structures are essential for the safety, security, freedom of mobility and quality of life benefiting every single American. Without safe and efficient means of transporting goods and services, the economy suffers. Maintaining that vital infrastructure has always been a federal responsibility. Republicans have historically been the party of builders – from President Abraham Lincoln's signing of the Pacific Railway Act that led to the creation of the transcontinental railroad to President Teddy Roosevelt's drive to build the Panama Canal to President Eisenhower's establishment of the Interstate Highway System. Investment in transportation assets has been and continues to be a cornerstone of the American economy and, indeed, our national way of life. Underinvesting in this basic foundation of our economy leads to increased traffic congestion and the loss of jobs – not just of those who construct transportation systems, but also of those whose goods and services depend on those systems.

We must invest in rebuilding and improving our transportation infrastructure and ensure that we adequately maintain these systems for the future. We support a multi-modal approach to our transportation needs. With sufficient capacity, well-maintained roads, bridges, mass transit systems, aviation and rail give Americans choices. Choices of goods available at affordable prices brought to market by the best available means. Choices of travel at the convenience of individuals, freeing them from traffic, pollution, and overdependence on foreign oil. Today, technology has advanced to the point where we can choose the method of travel that we prefer and where to live, work and vacation while also being considerate of the environment.

By reducing mandates, cutting red tape, and promoting regulatory common sense, state and local officials can have the flexibility that they need to set their own transportation priorities, from unclogging bottlenecks on highways to creating bike trails. The investments that they make will improve overall commerce and the quality of life throughout the nation; enhance our competitiveness by being able to efficiently and effectively bring our goods to market; strengthen travel and tourism; and will, most importantly, enhance the safety of the American people.