



## MEMORANDUM

**To: ABA Members**

**From: ABA Senior Vice President for Government Affairs Clyde Hart**

**Date: July 17, 2009**

**RE: Senate Panel OKs 18-Month Transportation Plan Over House Objections**

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House Transportation & Infrastructure Committee Chairman Rep. Jim Oberstar (D-Minn.) has suggested publicly he is considering he may take his fight for the \$500 billion, six-year highway bill to a House-Senate conference following a Senate committee's passage of an 18-month extension he termed "irresponsible."

The spike in urgency over the highway bill comes in the wake of the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee having approved an 18-month extension of current surface transportation policy July 15, rejecting an even shorter 12-month proposed plan. The move raised the ire of House leaders who contend a full six-year Reauthorization bill is a top national priority.

"The Senate has acted," Oberstar said July 16. "They've got a bill, it's the wrong bill, but they have a bill out there. And the idea of a House-Senate conference is that we reconcile differences. The point is, there's no need for extension of current law, all we need to do is plug the hole" in the Highway Trust Fund.

"By putting on an 18-month band-aid, I think we are compounding the damage that will be done to the economy and the potential for any recovery in this country," T&I Committee Ranking Member John Mica (R-Fla.) said, adding that the Senate bill is "a prelude to a national disaster" because its inherently uncertain funding stream would inhibit states' ability to plan long-term projects.

Oberstar went as far to describe the proposed extension as "terribly detrimental" and "irresponsible," and adamantly opposes any extension beyond the Sept. 30 expiration of the current law.

The approved bill does not address the \$20 billion needed to maintain the Highway Trust Fund's solvency through the 18-month period. Senate Finance Committee Chairman Max Baucus (D-Mont.) is expected to introduce legislation imminently to provide that \$20 billion.