



## ***NEWS from the T&I Committee***

***Committee on Transportation and  
Infrastructure***

***U.S. House of Representatives, 2165 Rayburn HOB,  
Washington, DC 20515***

***[www.transportation.house.gov](http://www.transportation.house.gov)***

***Hon. James L. Oberstar (Minn.), Chairman***

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### **Oberstar Announces National Bridge Plan *Initiative would create dedicated fund for bridge repair***

MINNEAPOLIS—Just one week after an Interstate highway bridge collapsed in Minneapolis, MN, taking at least five lives and plunging dozens of vehicles and their occupants into the Mississippi River, Rep. James L. Oberstar (Minn.) today proposed a comprehensive program to repair the nation's structurally deficient bridges.

Oberstar, who chairs the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, announced the plan today in Minneapolis after visiting the site of the bridge tragedy.

“One week ago, a routine commute after a day of work, school, or shopping turned to horror, shock, and tears,” Oberstar said. “Today, as the recovery effort continues, we ask ourselves if such a tragic failure can happen elsewhere. How many structurally deficient bridges are out there? What repairs are immediately needed?”

Oberstar pointed out that there are 73,784 bridges in the country rated “structurally deficient” by the U.S. Department of Transportation. He said a major reason why these bridges are not repaired, rehabilitated, or replaced can be attributed to a “tombstone mentality” in the Federal Government and in the States.

“We react to tragedy, when lives are lost, but we fail to take preemptive action that could prevent these tragic events,” Oberstar said.

Oberstar's initiative addresses the need to repair, rehabilitate, or replace the aging, failing bridges on the National Highway System. The NHS consists of the Eisenhower Interstate System, the Strategic Highway Military Network, and additional major highways across the country. The NHS covers only 4.1 percent of total road mileage in the country, but it carries 45 percent of its traffic, in terms of vehicle miles traveled. NHS bridges carry more than 70 percent of the nation's bridge traffic. The Department of Transportation lists 6,175 NHS bridges as structurally deficient; almost half of them (2,830) are on Interstate highways.

The initiative has four main components:

1. It significantly improves bridge inspection requirements.
2. It provides dedicated funding.
3. It distributes funds based on public safety and need. ***It prohibits Congressional and Administration earmarks,*** and
4. It establishes a trust fund, modeled after the Highway Trust Fund, to provide a dedicated source of revenue for the repair, rehabilitation, and replacement of structurally deficient bridges. Revenues deposited in this trust fund will be ***available for no other purpose.***

Oberstar said addressing this issue will be the first order of business for his Committee when Congress returns in September. He will convene a hearing of the full Committee to look at the problem of structurally deficient bridges on September 5, and will immediately begin work to move his initiative through Congress.

“We cannot wait for another tragedy,” Oberstar said. “We must act, and act quickly.”

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