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Report Highlights Potential Taxpayer Savings, Outlines Passenger Rail Improvements

Washington, DC – A U.S. House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee Republican staff report released today highlights opportunities to better manage federally owned assets and eliminate wasteful spending that could potentially save taxpayers hundreds of billions of dollars.

The report, entitled “Sitting on Our Assets: The Federal Government’s Misuse of Taxpayer-Owned Assets,” focuses on agencies and programs under the Committee’s jurisdiction, including the U.S. Department of Transportation, Amtrak, the Coast Guard, the Federal Aviation Administration, the Army Corps of Engineers, the General Services Administration, and the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

The report, released by the top Republicans of the Transportation Committee and its six subcommittees, can be accessed at <http://republicans.transportation.house.gov/>.

“In these difficult economic times, Americans everywhere are making sacrifices and more effectively managing their budgets. It’s about time the federal government does the same, and the opportunities outlined in this report to cut wasteful spending and more efficiently utilize the government’s assets is a place to start,” said **Rep. Bill Shuster (R-PA)**. **“Investing in our nation’s infrastructure is of critical importance. Our nation’s infrastructure was once the envy of the world, but it is falling into disrepair and threatens our economic security and global competitiveness. We must increase our investment, but we must do so in a manner that eliminates waste and abuse and makes the most effective use of taxpayer dollars.**

“This comprehensive review identifies up to a quarter of a trillion dollars in potential savings that could be achieved by eliminating waste, better managing critical federally-owned assets, and operating government programs with more efficiency,” said **U.S. Rep. John L. Mica (R-FL)**, the Committee’s Ranking Republican. “Congress must become a better steward of the people’s money and resources. It’s time we stop sitting on our assets, stop wasting taxpayers’ money, and start getting the best return on the hard-earned funds Americans send to Washington.”

Congressman Shuster added “According to the National Surface Transportation and Revenue Study Commissions, if you add one federal dollar to a project, it can add 14 years to the delivery time. This is simply unacceptable. Instead of making things more complicated than they already are, we need to be focused on streamlining approvals and cutting through red tape that wastes both time and money. Getting projects moving faster lowers costs dramatically and allows us to use our limited resources to make more effective investments in America’s infrastructure.

A portion of the report focused on Amtrak’s mismanagement of the Northeast Corridor, a critical transportation asset in the nation’s most densely populated region. **Shuster, who is the House Railroads, Pipelines & Hazardous Materials Subcommittee Ranking Member**, noted that, “As we enter this new era of high-speed rail development, it is important that we look back at Amtrak’s track record of chronic mismanagement. We cannot afford to continue to risk billions of taxpayer dollars when Amtrak has a demonstrated record of failing to deliver.”

“We need competition in intercity passenger rail service in the United States,” **Shuster** continued. “It is time for DOT to implement a pilot program that would allow private sector companies an opportunity to show that passenger rail can be both cost-effective and meet high service standards. The Administration’s decision to award 76 of the 78 high-speed rail grants to Amtrak routes is proving to be a serious mistake. It’s time to finally partner with the private sector to make the most of our government’s investment, instead of creating rail services that will continue to require huge subsidies and drain taxpayer resources.”

Rep. Shuster supports many of the recommended actions outlined in the report, including:

- Congress should hold public hearings and other meetings with Northeast Corridor officials to ensure that true high-speed rail alternatives are considered for the NEC.
- FRA should reissue a Request for Expressions of Interest for development of high-speed rail that is specific to the NEC.

Additionally, **Rep. Shuster** strongly urged the Federal Railroad Administration to complete the required rulemaking that will implement the Alternative Passenger Rail Pilot Program authorized in the 2008 passenger rail authorization bill. Under this law, the FRA was required to complete a rulemaking by October 16, 2009 to establish a framework for private sector participation in passenger rail service on a pilot basis. **Rep. Shuster and Mica** wrote to **DOT Secretary Ray LaHood** on July 27, 2010 urging the Department to immediately proceed with the rulemaking.

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