

INFORMATION RELEASE



Office of the Director

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NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION STUDY TO BE RELEASED AT LITTLE ROCK NEWS CONFERENCE

LITTLE ROCK (8-27) A study on the transportation capacity crisis in Rural America will be released by the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) during a news conference in Little Rock on Monday, August 30, according to Arkansas State Highway and Transportation Department (AHTD) officials. It will be held at 1:15 p.m. in the Arkansas Ballroom on the lobby level of the Peabody Hotel.

John Horsley, AASHTO Executive Director, will present a summary of the report. Joining him at the podium will be AHTD Director Dan Flowers, Mississippi Department of Transportation Director and AASHTO President Butch Brown, and The Poultry Federation of Arkansas-Missouri-Oklahoma President Marvin Childers.

Presentation of the report is being made during the annual meeting of the Southeastern Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (SASHTO). Flowers is President of SASHTO and Arkansas is serving as host state. Directors of the 13 SASHTO states will join the news conference.

“Connecting Rural and Urban America” is the third in a series of reports generated by AASHTO to identify the need to increase capacity in our transportation system to unlock gridlock, generate jobs, deliver freight, and connect rural and urban America.

“Arkansas is typical Rural America,” said AASHTO’s Horsley. “Every American is important to the national economy, whether they raise poultry or cattle, harvest wheat, deliver wind turbines or manufacture goods.”

“This report reveals the challenges that rural states like Arkansas face,” said Flowers. “We have many more highway needs than funds to meet those needs. We have over 16,000 highway miles in our system – 12th largest in the nation.”

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The report recommends that any reauthorization of federal transportation legislation should:

- 1) Continue to fund rural portions of the Interstate Highway System and other Federal-aid highways that connect America;
- 2) Double federal investment in rural transit systems to meet rising demand; and,
- 3) Expand the existing capacity of the Interstate system, upgrade rural routes to Interstate standards and connect newly urbanized areas to the Interstate system.

The report notes that Interstate 540 is the primary link to Walmart, Tyson Foods, J.B. Hunt Transport Services and the University of Arkansas, and that plans for \$350 million in improvements have been identified. It also lists the Fayetteville-Springdale-Rogers metropolitan area as the 12th fastest growing population area in the country during 2000-2009.

Hot Springs and Jonesboro are also mentioned in the report – as urbanized areas with populations over 50,000 with no direct access to an Interstate.

“El Dorado is the largest populated city (over 20,000) in Arkansas not even connected to an Interstate with a four-lane highway,” according to Arkansas Highway Commission Vice Chairman Madison Murphy of El Dorado. “That is the first thing that economic developers look at, so we can’t even get into the recruiting mix.”

Copies of the report will be available at the news conference or at www.transportation.org.

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