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Rep. Gary Miller Joins Local Leaders in Praising the Inclusion of Environmental Streamlining Provisions in the Highway Conference Report

WASHINGTON, DC – Today, the House of Representatives passed the conference report to H.R. 4348, reauthorizing our nation’s surface transportation programs through September 2014. Included in the conference report are provisions that Congressman Miller has authored to cut bureaucratic red tape delaying needed transportation projects that will improve our nation’s aging infrastructure and save taxpayer dollars. Following the passage of the conference report, Congressman Miller issued the following statement:

“I am pleased that these environmental streamlining reforms are included in the highway conference report. With our nation’s infrastructure aging and our economic recovery faltering, it is critical that government at all levels maximize every dollar spent on improving transportation. Across the nation, vital highway projects that will create good-paying jobs and improve the commutes of millions of Americans are delayed because of onerous regulations. It is time to cut through the red tape and get these transportation projects moving.”

Provisions in the Highway conference report that stem from Congressman Miller’s Breaking Down Barriers Act will accelerate the creation of over 800,000 jobs in the United States, and ensure that needed transportation improvements are delivered on schedule. Essential to these efforts is allowing states to take the lead role when complying with federal environmental laws and regulations.

In 2005, language authored by Congressman Miller was included in the SAFE TEA-LU Surface Transportation Reauthorization establishing a pilot program that allows states to take on the responsibility of complying with National Environmental Policy Act requirements for highway projects under the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). California was one of five states who participated in the pilot program, which shaved approximately 17 months off of the environmental review process and 30 months off of overall project delivery while retaining the integrity of current environmental regulations. The conference report passed by the House today will now allow all states to participate.

In addition to delegating the responsibility of federal environmental compliance to states, the conference report includes other common sense changes to make highway project delivery more efficient. This includes allowing agencies to move forward on highway design and construction activities prior to receiving grant funds, which current law already allows them to do on transit projects. To prevent the federal government from dragging its feet on moving forward on crucial

highway improvements, the Highway Conference report includes Breaking Down Barrier provisions that require prompt action by federal agencies, including establishing deadlines for project approvals.

Orange County Transportation Authority Chairman and Laguna Niguel Mayor Paul Glaab joined Congressman Miller in praising the inclusion of the environmental streamlining reforms:

"OCTA is delighted that breaking down barriers to project delivery is included in the transportation authorizing legislation. Ensuring we preserve the environment while moving critical projects to construction was a challenge but one that has been embraced with bipartisan support. We are grateful to Congressman Miller who has led the charge for these provisions and the result will be faster projects, quicker jobs creation and savings to the American taxpayer."

San Bernardino County Supervisor Josie Gonzales added:

"The County of San Bernardino is pleased with the cornerstone provision of the Highway Reauthorization Bill (HR 4348) that will expedite project delivery. We especially applaud the bold leadership of Congressman Gary Miller on this critical issue to the County and the Nation. His introduction of the Breaking Down Barriers Act, H.R. 2766, which San Bernardino County strongly supported, served as the catalyst of this cornerstone reform.

This important reform of federal law will accelerate project delivery time, allow more projects to be constructed, and create a dramatic cost savings to the tax-payers while still preserving current environmental protections. This balancing of interests is great news to residents of the County and the Nation. We are pleased to have worked with Congressman Miller and the Congressional Committees on this important reform."

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