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Contact: Jennifer Marusak
Communications Director
Driving Louisiana Forward
225.572.1916

“Driving Louisiana Forward” Keeps the Wheels in Motion

Baton Rouge, La. – Driving Louisiana Forward this week announced plans to continue its statewide campaign and unveiled a new package of proposed legislation.

Driving Louisiana Forward (DLF) is a statewide grassroots effort aimed at providing a long-term solution to the under-funding of the state’s transportation system and its effect on economic development.

“We made some good inroads last year in the campaign, thanks to the support of the governor and the Legislature, but there is still a lot of work to be done,” said Jennifer Marusak, communications director of DLF. “Louisiana still faces a \$14 billion backlog in unmet construction needs, and our current road, bridge and port funding simply does not work.”

Marusak noted the successes of the campaign in the recent legislative sessions, including the shift of \$40 million from truck registration fees and the phase-in of vehicle sales tax revenue to the Transportation Trust Fund (TTF). The Legislature also appropriated \$600 million in one-time surplus funds to transportation projects and removed the responsibility of \$40 million in payments for state police traffic control from the TTF.

However, Marusak said, “According to the Reason Foundation, Louisiana’s transportation system has dropped to a ranking of 40th in the nation. The Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development (DOTD) remains drastically underfunded.”

Currently, the state’s primary source of road, bridge and port money is a 16-cent gas tax, approved in 1984 and never adjusted to current inflation. Today, the buying power of those 16 cents is less than eight cents. According to Marusak, that depreciation is the primary reason for the backlog.

DLF’s proposed legislative package is expected to generate about \$600 million each year to ensure adequate, long-term and reliable funding for the state’s transportation system without increasing state taxes or fees. The specific proposals include:

- Accelerating the shift of vehicle sales taxes into the TTF - \$259 million over seven years
- Moving DOTD employee benefits out of the TTF - \$85 million

- Creating a Windfall Highway and Infrastructure Protection Fund using excess mineral revenue dollars - \$120 million
- Using one-time appropriations from the state surplus to fund one-time expenditures.

DLF will be discussing these legislative proposals with the governor's office, members of the Legislature and businesses and citizens across the state. The DLF campaign will also be supported by a paid advertising campaign.

“Properly funding our transportation infrastructure is critical to Louisiana’s economic development. While most people agree with this, we believe it will take a commitment from our leaders to support solutions to keep the wheels in motion,” Marusak concluded.

For more information on the Driving Louisiana Forward campaign, please visit www.drivinglouisianaforward.org.