

Washington, DC — Today Congressman Earl Blumenauer (D-Ore.), together with his colleagues from the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, introduced a short-term surface transportation extension bill to provide transportation investment funding to stimulate the economy and create jobs. The bill passed the House today by voice vote. The current transportation authorization expires at the end of this month, and the five month extension bill allows lawmakers to develop a more comprehensive \$375 billion transportation bill by February 2004.

“We need to put Americans, especially those in hard-hit Oregon, back to work and promote strong economic and transportation investments,” Blumenauer said. “This legislation will put people to work today fixing crumbling bridges, improving transit, rail and roads, and strengthening our economy.”

The legislation allocates \$157 million for Oregon, including \$63 million for highway improvements, \$22 million for bridge upgrades, \$19.5 million for transit projects, \$4 million for metropolitan planning, and \$440,000 for recreational trails, in addition to a variety of other funds.

Blumenauer voted for the bill, but voiced concerns about a specific provision that allows state departments of transportation to suspend the guaranteed funding for Transportation Enhancements, CMAQ and STP Suballocation to Urban Areas programs during the five-month extension period.

“While I support the overall bill, I am also concerned about a provision that gives state departments of transportation wide latitude to shift dollars between federal-aid highway program categories during the five-month period,” Blumenauer said. “Given that existing law already provides considerable flexibility to transfer federal funds between categorical programs, this provision is unnecessary. If we allow dollars to be redirected from investments in critical areas such as highway safety, transportation enhancement activities, metropolitan traffic congestion and clean air programs, we run the risk of sending the wrong message about our commitment to preserve the structure of TEA-21.”