

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

NEWS RELEASE

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Gov. Whitman Joined Governors to Urge Congress and President to Reauthorize ISTEA

Gov. Christie Whitman today joined governors from throughout the Northeast region and the United States to urge Congress and the President to take early action to reauthorize ISTEA, the federal transportation program. ISTEA provides New Jersey with vital funding for public transit and highway programs to help improve access, attract business and create more jobs for New Jerseyans.

"New Jersey's dense population and growing business economy place tremendous demands on our transportation infrastructure," said Gov. Whitman. "The reauthorization of ISTEA must continue to provide New Jersey with its fair share of funding. ISTEA funds are vital to the continuation of key transportation projects and for the future economic prospects of the state."

Gov. Whitman joined with governors from eight other states as part of ISTEA Works, a coalition to urge Congress to reauthorize ISTEA without significant change. The ISTEA program officially expired in October 1997 and was temporarily extended. ISTEA is now set to expire on May 1 and Congressional action is required for reauthorization. Since 1992, the program has authorized approximately \$24 billion each year for highway and transit projects throughout the country.

Some states are seeking alternatives for redistribution of ISTEA funding, which would result in a loss of funding to New Jersey. Gov. Whitman has been a strong proponent of reauthorizing ISTEA in its current format, maintaining New Jersey's share of funding.

Because of New Jersey's aging transportation infrastructure, the state has received \$6.5 billion for transportation projects through the ISTEA program since 1992.

The Governor stated that the continuation of ISTEA is especially important for New Jersey, given the amount the state invests in taxes to the federal government. Overall, New Jersey taxpayers contribute \$17 billion more to the federal government than the state actually receives in federal programs and benefits. This amount is almost equal to the entire budget for the federal highway program.

Through a combination of state and ISTEA funding, New Jersey has undertaken transportation projects including the completion of missing highway links, rehabilitation and replacement of bridges and critical public

transportation projects.

"A successful state is one in which goods, services and people can move freely and easily from one place to another," said Gov. Whitman. "An investment in New Jersey's infrastructure is a commitment to the business community, the tourism community and all of our citizens for improved transportation and a sound economy."

Through its Transportation Trust Fund alone, New Jersey will commit more than \$3.5 billion through the year 2000 to advance 465 highway and public transit projects and support more than 250,000 jobs.

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