



## OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

### NEWS RELEASE

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### Governor Opposes U.S. Senate ISTEA Bill

Gov. Christie Whitman today expressed her opposition to highway legislation introduced in the U.S. Senate today by Senators Chafee, Warner and Baucus.

"I am extremely disappointed with the federal highway funding legislation introduced today in the U.S. Senate," said Gov. Whitman. "The bill abandons most of the successful programs embodied in the expiring ISTEA and shifts funding from the northeast states that have the most pressing infrastructure needs in the nation to the southern and western states."

State Transportation Commissioner John J. Haley, Jr. said, "This legislation takes a giant step backwards because it fails to allocate funds according to need. One region of this nation cannot be singled out without impacting the overall effectiveness of the national transportation system. The New Jersey, New York and Pennsylvania area is home to two of the largest ports and four of the busiest airports in the nation. If we can't move our people and goods, than America can't move."

Under the Senate bill, New Jersey would lose 16 percent of its current share of federal highway funds, going from 2.86 percent to 2.41 percent. New Jersey would also become a "highway donor" state, receiving about 93 cents for each dollar sent to the federal Highway Trust fund as opposed to the current \$1.12 for each dollar contributed. In actual dollars, New Jersey contributed \$574 million to the trust fund in 1996. Under this bill, the state would receive only \$531 million per year.

"The Senate bill disregards the concept of distributing federal resources to the areas of our nation that have the greatest needs, a concept that has resulted in New Jersey providing much more in tax dollars to the federal government than it receives back overall," said Gov. Whitman. "ISTEA is one of the few programs in which a needs based funding concept benefits our state."

The Governor will be working closely with the New Jersey Congressional delegation and the Congressional leadership to see that this bill is substantially changed before it becomes law.

Last week, Gov. Whitman supported many elements of a bill released by House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee Chairman Bud Shuster.

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