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CONFIRMATION OF NEW TRANSPORTATION SECRETARY OPENS A NEW ERA IN SEARCH FOR FUNDING SOLUTIONS

*Tolling And Innovative Financing Have Won Support From New DOT Leader;
IBTTA Foresees New Solutions Amid Infrastructure Funding Crisis*

WASHINGTON – The confirmation of Mary Peters as the new U.S. Secretary of Transportation was hailed today by the International Bridge, Tunnel and Turnpike Association (IBTTA), which praised her victory as a breakthrough in the search for new ways to finance the nation’s infrastructure construction and maintenance priorities. The U.S. Senate’s confirmation of Peters reflects broad public support for her approach to transportation funding, which has long focused on solving the crisis that has allowed the nation’s basic infrastructure to erode, said IBTTA’s leaders.

“Mary Peters is poised to become an outstanding Secretary of Transportation, with an opportunity to lead the nation toward a new range of options for renewing critical parts of our nation’s infrastructure – our highways, roads, bridges and tunnels,” said Patrick D. Jones, executive director of the IBTTA, which is the advocate for the nation’s toll-based transportation facilities. “Her strong advocacy for innovative solutions awhile she was Federal Highway

Administrator holds the potential for the Bush administration to leave a lasting legacy by embracing market-based solutions to our national funding crisis. The nation's transportation industries are eager to work with her to strengthen the U.S. transportation network.”

Peters' nomination recently won confirmation on a voice vote in the U.S. Senate, with no opposition.

As the head of the Federal Highway Administration, Peters compiled a strong record of supporting tolling and public-private partnerships to help fund the construction and operations of highways, said Jones. He noted that Peters also has significant private-sector experience, following her service as a senior executive of HDR, Inc., an architectural, engineering and consulting firm based in Omaha, Nebraska.

Now that she has been confirmed by the Senate as Transportation Secretary, Peters becomes the *ex officio* chair of the 12-member National Surface Transportation Policy and Revenue Study Commission – a panel that is considering innovative approaches to transportation funding. That commission recently held its first field hearing, seeking public commentary beyond Washington, D.C. IBTTA co-hosted that field hearing, which occurred in Dallas, Texas. The next meeting of the commission will occur in Washington on October 18 and 19. Further field hearings are planned for this fall and winter.

“The chronic erosion of our transportation network is leading to the decay of our economic strength,” Jones told the commission in his testimony at the two-day hearing in Dallas. “The intensifying gridlock on our highways is steadily undermining our quality of life.”

Tolling-based solutions recently won a strong recommendation by a national panel of experts – the Transportation Research Board, which is an arm of the National Research Council, the scholarly body that advises Congress on science

and engineering policy. After a two-year study, the panel reported in January 2006 that the federal Highway Trust Fund, by itself, is no longer a reliable long-term source of funding. The expansion of tolling and other funding mechanisms will be needed to ensure the strength and safety of the U.S. highway network.

“America is running critically short on funds for highway construction and maintenance. The time to act is now, before we suffer further damage to our economy and to our quality of life,” said Jones. “Secretary Peters recognizes that we can only solve the transportation funding crisis if we harness the power of market-based mechanisms, encouraging government cooperation with the private sector.”

“There are pockets of innovation around the nation as state, regional and local transportation authorities take the lead in finding creative solutions,” said Jones. “With Mary Peters overseeing federal transportation policy in Washington, innovators will have a strong ally at the national level.”

The International Bridge, Tunnel and Turnpike Association (IBTTA) is the worldwide alliance of toll operators and associated industries that provides a forum for sharing knowledge and ideas to promote and enhance toll-financed transportation services. IBTTA is the worldwide association for the owners and operators of toll highways, bridges and tunnels and the companies that provide products and services to the toll industry. IBTTA has more than 250 corporate members that operate toll facilities in 35 states in the U.S. and in 25 countries on six continents around the world. IBTTA members are leaders in technological innovation and understand how technology can reshape road financing, organizational models and service delivery.

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