**Investing in Infrastructure: The Road to Recovery**
**Testimony of**
**The American Traffic Safety Services Association**
**October 29, 2008**

The American Traffic Safety Services Association (ATSSA) is pleased to provide this testimony to the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee of the United States House of Representatives as it examines how infrastructure investment contributes to job creation and economic recovery. ATSSA is a trade association located in Fredericksburg, VA. Our more than 1600 members manufacture and install lifesaving roadway safety devices such as signage, markings, guardrail, barrier, crash cushions, impact attenuators, variable message signs, and everything orange you see in a work zone. They are on the front lines of construction every day.

As the committee will no doubt hear from others, each $1 billion in roadway funding creates about 35,000 jobs and generates more than $2 billion in economic activity. Conversely, losing roadway funding has a direct negative economic impact through job loss, reduced mobility and lost productivity.

The current funding volatility due to uncertain motor fuel tax receipts at the federal, state and local levels of government has already created construction disruptions around the country. Fuel prices topping $4 per gallon -- and the general economic slowdown resulting from the troubles on Wall Street – have exacerbated this crisis. The reduction in vehicle miles traveled and the reduction in fuel purchases continue to impact this nation's transportation funding system.

Spending resources on roadway safety features should be a key component of any transportation spending that might arise from an economic recovery or infrastructure stimulus package. In addition to providing needed jobs in the transportation sector, a key benefit from targeting a portion of an infrastructure stimulus package to roadway safety is that – in general – upgrading safety features does not require lengthy planning cycles, environmental reviews, etc. In addition, roadway safety features save lives and mitigate injuries – thus resulting in substantial savings in the area of "societal costs". These additional savings provide a second economic impact that is too often forgotten when we discuss infrastructure investment.

States are only now beginning to report results from safety projects undertaken with Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) funds. For example, many state DOTs have installed median barrier to prevent crossover crashes on divided highways. This barrier has been reported as being 95% to 100% effective, virtually eliminating crossover deaths in some states. Likewise, the state of Missouri has been very aggressive in using rumble stripes on two lane rural roads to reduce run-off-road crashes resulting in a 25% decrease in these crash types.

Original installation and modernization of safety features can result in clear economic benefit. In a recent report on its Strategic Highway Safety Plan, CalTrans stated that for a three-year evaluation period of 86 projects totaling $91.7 million, the minimum savings was $635 million -- which translates into a benefits-cost ratio of 47:1 (assuming a life cycle of 20 years). On a local basis, Mendocino County, CA, determined a minimum benefit cost ratio of 159:1 for its $79,260 sign installation and upgrade program.

If Congress is interested in putting additional transportation funds to use quickly, a portion of a stimulus package could be targeted to the following activities:

1. Installation or upgrade of median barriers on the National Highway System;
2. Installation of rumble strips or another warning device, if the rumble strips or other warning devices do not adversely affect the safety or mobility of bicyclists, pedestrians, and the disabled;
3. Improvement of highway signage and pavement markings for both state and locally owned roads, including but not limited to any material upgrades and the implementation of any assessment or management method designed to meet state-established performance standards or required by federal regulation or the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices to meet minimum levels of retroreflectivity.
4. Installation or modernization of guardrails, barriers and crash attenuators;
5. Installation of a traffic control or other warning device at a location with high accident potential;
6. Systemic improvements to dangerous rural roads, including signage, markings, crash cushions and barriers, guardrails, and systems and devices intended to reduce crashes and fatalities.

In order to inject funds into the economic system as promptly as possible, consideration might be given to requiring that each state pass through 25% to 50% of any new transportation funding to the local level. However, it is our understanding that under current Federal programs local governments are encountering difficulty in complying with complex application procedures and with finding project funds to advance for later reimbursement by the federal-aid highway program. Therefore, we recommend that federal and state application requirements for these funds should be minimal. We also believe that at this time a mechanism should be included that would ameliorate the requirement that local governments advance project funds and subsequently be reimbursed through the highway account. Perhaps a method could be established to allow at least a partial "advance" of funds to recipients at the local level due to the severe stress on local government finances as a result of the extreme downturn in housing values and their impact on real estate tax revenues. An additional method to accelerate the expenditure of funds would be to take advantage of provisions in existing law that allow for 100% federal share on certain safety projects.

We would like to thank the committee for the opportunity to submit these comments for the Hearing Record. We stand willing to assist the committee in any way possible in this important effort.