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**CSAC APPLAUDS CALIFORNIA LAWMAKERS FOR
EFFORTS TO PROTECT LOCAL BRIDGES**

*Representatives Mike Thompson (D-CA), Lois Capps (D-CA), and Glenn
Thompson (R-PA) lead bipartisan letter to highway bill conferees*

(*Sacramento*) – Today, 42 bipartisan members of the House of Representatives wrote to House and Senate transportation committee leaders in support of dedicated federal funding for off-system bridges. The letter, spearheaded by Representatives Mike Thompson (D-CA), Lois Capps (D-CA), and Glenn Thompson (R-PA), urges committee leaders to retain in the final multi-year surface transportation reauthorization bill Section 133(g) of the Senate legislation (S. 1813), which would require minimum funding levels for bridges not on Federal-aid Highways. The House version of the legislation (H.R. 4348) is silent on the issue.

“In California, counties own and operate 38 percent of the state’s roads and local governments, including counties, own and operate 50 percent of the bridges,” said Paul McIntosh, California State Association of Counties (CSAC) Executive Director. “Clearly this funding is vital to the safety of our vast transportation system and we applaud Representatives Mike Thompson and Lois Capps, as well as Representative Glenn Thompson, for leading this effort in the House. We also appreciate the members of the California congressional delegation who agreed to sign onto this important letter.”

Along with Representatives Thompson and Capps, CSAC has worked with the National Association of Counties (NACo), to develop and promote this important bipartisan correspondence. Of the members signing onto the letter, nearly half are from the State of California.

As noted in the letter, the federal Highway Bridge Program has required states to spend at least 15 percent of their annual apportioned bridge funding on bridges located on public roads other than those on a Federal-aid highway. This requirement, which has been in place since 1978, has allowed local governments to improve and replace locally-owned bridges considered to be “off-system.” Of the 590,000 bridges in the United States, more than 50 percent are off-system.

In California, local bridges comprise an integral part of the local streets and roads infrastructure. Currently, California has 4,428 bridges on the Eligible Bridge List (bridges that are classified as structurally deficient or functionally obsolete and fail to meet the requisite Sufficiency Rating); 2,776 of these bridges are locally owned and operated. The California Statewide Local Streets and Roads Needs Assessment found that, based solely upon projects identified by local agencies and approved by Caltrans for future federal funding, the local streets and roads bridge needs total \$2.6 billion. Without dedicated federal funding for these bridges, it is highly unlikely that bridge maintenance, repair, and capital projects will be unable to effectively compete against other capacity enhancement projects.

A group of 47 members of the House and Senate are in the process of attempting to negotiate the final details of a new surface transportation reauthorization bill. Chaired by Senate Environment and Public Works Committee Chairman Barbara Boxer (D-CA), the conference committee has until the end of June to either finalize a new bill or approve another short-term extension of current law.

The California State Association of Counties is the voice of California's 58 counties at the state and federal level.

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