

Now we want to appoint conferees so we can go to conference and reconcile those differences.

Unfortunately, there has been an objection on the other side of the aisle to proceeding. I again urge the Democratic leadership to allow us to appoint conferees so we can begin the process. The large bipartisan vote on passage of this legislation in this body as well as in the House indicates we are all willing to work together, and I hope we can continue and progress toward a conference of agreement.

On another note, I remind my colleagues that on Wednesday of this week, President Aznar of Spain will address a joint meeting of Congress. President Aznar will begin his speech at 11 a.m. Therefore, Members are asked to gather in the Senate Chamber at 10:40 so that we may leave as a body for the House Chamber to hear that address.

IMPORTANCE OF S. 1072

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, I would like to take a few minutes to comment on the importance of proceeding to the highway bill which will be the focus of this institution over the next 2 weeks. At 5:45 today we will have the cloture vote on the motion to proceed to the highway bill. I do hope cloture will be invoked and we will be able to begin consideration of this vitally important bill.

In the next few moments, I want to share why I believe this bill is so important to us, to the American people and, thus, we need to invoke cloture. There is broad support for this legislation here in the Senate as well as all across America. We will spend the next couple of weeks considering it on the Senate floor. A number of Senate committees are involved in this important bill, including the Environment and Public Works Committee, the Commerce Committee, the Banking Committee, the Finance Committee—all have vital and critical pieces of this bill. We will work through their various committee amendments over the next 2 weeks.

It is key that we focus our full attention on this legislation. America's transportation infrastructure is crucial to our vibrant economy, to our growing economy today. America is interlaced with over 4 million miles of roads and highways. Our transportation infrastructure is estimated to be worth more than \$1.75 trillion. The interstate highway system has often been called the greatest public works project in history. Every \$1 billion we invest in transportation infrastructure generates more than \$2 billion in economic activity and creates more than 47,000 new jobs.

Our roads, our ports, our railroads are vital to America's economic success. We know this well in my home State of Tennessee where companies such as Federal Express, Averitt Express, and U.S. Express are located.

The success of these companies is dependent on the quality of our Nation's infrastructure.

Around the Nation, America's transportation infrastructure is deteriorating badly and becoming painfully overcrowded. America's roads especially are not keeping up. You can ask any American commuter. There is bumper-to-bumper traffic, not just during rush hour but all day long. Indeed, in our Nation's urban areas, traffic delays have more than tripled over the past 20 years. That is not just in the larger cities—New York, Atlanta, Los Angeles. In Raleigh-Durham, commuting time has gone up nearly 25 percent in 10 years. In Charlotte, traffic congestion has added 39 additional commuting hours per year, the equivalent of nearly an entire week stuck in traffic.

In Tennessee, traffic congestion has increased in all our major metropolitan areas. In my hometown of Nashville, commuters drive an average of 32 miles per day. Metropolitan planning organizations are struggling to meet demand.

It is estimated that Americans suffer through more than 3.6 billion hours in delays and waste over 5.7 billion gallons of fuel per year just sitting in traffic. These transportation delays ripple through our Nation's economic sector and result in lost productivity, lost wages, and lost jobs.

We cannot ask our fellow citizens to join the great American workforce and then stand idly by while our roads decay and that daily commute to work stretches from minutes into hours. It is a jobs issue. This bill is a quality-of-life issue, and it is a serious safety issue as well. More time on the road translates into more accidents; 41,000 travelers are killed each year on our worsening roads, and over 3 million people are injured.

As our highways become more and more congested, drivers begin to take alternate routes on town streets, which we know exposes them to even greater danger. Passing the highway bill is life-saving. It will save an estimated 4,000 lives each year by simply improving our roads and educating the public about road safety. In Tennessee, our State highway department is investing in measures to reduce traffic-related fatalities. States across the country will need additional resources to make similar improvements.

Passing the highway bill will also improve the mass transit system that is so vital to our thriving urban centers. With new and modernized vehicles and facilities, mass transit is gaining in popularity. The Department of Transportation reports that from 1997 to 2000, passenger mileage on mass transit increased by 125 percent. More people are using trains more frequently not just to get to work but to run errands and to travel. Passenger mileage on trains has gone up 16 percent. But like our roads, our transit system is not keeping up. Average rail operating

speeds have actually declined since 1997 as trains are older and we are using slower rail systems. As daily commuters can testify, trains are getting more and more crowded as well.

The Department of Transportation warns that as the Nation's population continues to increase and more people live in urban areas, the need for investment in transit infrastructure will continue to grow.

Finally, the bill we have before us that we will begin to consider is the result of a long bipartisan process. It is based on more than 2 years of work, including 13 hearings and testimony from over 100 witnesses. The highway bill is a fair and comprehensive package that will benefit the entire Nation. From highways and bridges to bike paths, this bill will make our transportation safer, more efficient, and will stimulate job creation. Indeed, it is estimated that the highway bill under consideration will add a whopping 2 million jobs to the economy.

Our vast and interconnecting highways are emblematic of our great American spirit, our love of adventure, and our drive toward the unknown. Our highways, our bridges, our roads, our ports, and our trains are in fact very much the physical expression of the very name we bear, uniting the States of America. I urge my colleagues to take swift action to pass this legislation. We must work together to continue to move America forward.

I yield the floor.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

RECOGNITION OF THE DEMOCRATIC LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Democratic leader is recognized.

PASSING S. 1072

Mr. DASCHLE. Mr. President, I commend the distinguished majority leader for his statement on the importance of the legislation that will soon be pending. He and I have had a number of discussions about the legislation and the need to proceed. I applaud him for his leadership in making sure the Senate has an opportunity to complete its work on this bill at the earliest possible time. He has very persuasively articulated why this legislation is important not only for the State of Tennessee but for the country. I will have a lot more to say about the bill in the coming days. But I hope that in spite of the differences there may be with regard to allocation, priorities, and policy, we can find a way to work together on this bill and complete our work perhaps as early as a week from this coming Friday. I think it is doable.