

Washington, DC -- U.S. Representative Michael A. Arcuri (D-Utica) led legislation through the House of Representatives this week to significantly improve the safety of our nation's highway bridges by strengthening bridge inspection requirements and standards and prioritizing the reconstruction of structurally deficient bridges.

“Local communities need the resources to ensure that our families and friends don't have to worry about their safety during their morning commute to work, quick trip to the grocery store, or the drive to drop their children off at school,” **said Arcuri, a member of the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee**. “We owe it to the American public to do everything possible to ensure the safety of our bridges and highways. This legislation will make the bridges on our national highway system safer.”

Arcuri, a member of the House Committee on Rules, sponsored and introduced the Rule allowing the House to consider The National Highway Bridge Reconstruction and Inspection Act (H.R. 3999), which would authorize an additional \$1 billion for the reconstruction of structurally deficient bridges on the National Highway System and strengthen bridge inspection requirements and standards. If fully funded, this bill would create nearly 35,000 new jobs. H.R. 3999 passed the House of Representatives today by a bipartisan majority.

According to the Transportation Department, of the 599,731 bridges in the National Bridge inventory, 71,604 are structurally deficient and 80,793 are functionally obsolete. On August 1, 2007, the I-35W Bridge in Minneapolis, Minnesota collapsed into the Mississippi River, killing 13 people

The bill requires the Department of Transportation to develop a system to assign a risk-based priority to repair, rehabilitate, or replace each structurally deficient or functionally obsolete Federal-aid highway bridge. By creating a risk-based priority ranking, this bill establishes a new level of accountability in bridge repair and replacement by ensuring that states are investing in upgrading those bridges that are most critical to safety.

The National Highway Bridge Reconstruction and Inspection Act also:

- Requires the National Academy of Sciences to conduct an independent review of the

Department of Transportation's process for assigning risk-based priorities.

- Requires the Federal Highway Administration to immediately update the National Bridge Inspection Standards, as well as ensure uniformity among states in conducting inspections and evaluations.
- Strengthens training and certification requirements for bridge inspectors. Currently, there is no Federal standard or training requirement for front-line bridge inspectors.

H.R. 3999 prohibits any congressional or Administration earmarks to be provided under this program.

Arcuri also joined with Representatives Michael Conaway (R-TX) and Betty Sutton (D-OH) to successfully offer a bipartisan amendment to address rust and corrosion damage to bridges. The amendment expresses the sense of Congress that states should prepare corrosion mitigation and prevention plans when planning the construction of new bridges or the rehabilitation of existing bridges.

The amendment calls attention to the serious problem of bridge corrosion. Especially in the Northeast, weather and salt can cause steel beams to rust and undermine the integrity of an entire structure. Additionally, when water is able to penetrate a concrete bridge deck, it can corrode the steel rebar reinforcing the concrete, causing it to swell and fracture from the inside out.

"It is much easier and more cost effective to prevent or limit corrosion and rust at the beginning of a project," **Arcuri said**. "Corrosion prevention and mitigation plans can cost as little as a few thousand dollars to prepare during the design phase of a bridge project, but they can save municipalities hundreds of millions of dollars down the road. Having these plans up front can extend the life of the bridge, thereby saving both lives and millions of dollars in unnecessary repairs."

A copy of Arcuri's floor speech in support of H.R. 3999 is attached below:

U.S. Rep. Michael A. Arcuri (NY-24)
In the House of Representatives
Rule for Consideration of H.R. 3999 – Bridge Reconstruction

House Resolution 1344

July 23, 2008

M. Speaker, by direction of the Committee on Rules I call up House Resolution 1344 and ask for its immediate consideration.

For the purpose of debate only, I yield the customary 30 minutes to the gentleman from Florida, Mr. Diaz-Balart. All time yielded during consideration of the rule is for debate only. I ask unanimous consent that all Members have five legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and insert extraneous materials into the Record.

I yield myself such time as I may consume.

M. Speaker, House Resolution 1344 provides for consideration of H.R. 3999, the “National Highway Bridge Reconstruction and Inspection Act of 2007,” under a structured rule. The rule provides one hour of general debate controlled by the Committee on Transportation. The rule makes in order 11 of the amendments that were submitted to the Rules Committee.

I want to thank Chairman Oberstar for his leadership in addressing the critical needs of bridges on our federal highway system. I know that this issue is especially close to home for him, and my other colleagues from Minnesota, because of the tragedy that occurred when the I-35 bridge collapsed in Minneapolis last summer. I believe his leadership on this issue has produced a bill which will help ensure that similar tragedies do not befall other communities.

There has been much discussion recently about the condition of our nation’s transportation system and the growing pressures it faces from all sides – from skyrocketing costs of fuel and maintenance, to increased congestion and growing demand, to global climate change.

The staggering truth is that one-fourth of all bridges nationwide are deficient. Half of all bridges

in use were constructed in the 1960's. It is projected that motorist traffic will double in the next 30 years. In that same time, freight traffic in the U.S. will likely grow 92 percent in order to accommodate forecasted increases in American economic output. Growing demand for the movement of goods and services will place an unprecedented strain on our aging system.

Our communities need the resources to ensure that our families and friends don't have to worry about their safety during their morning commute to work, quick trip to the grocery store, or the drive to drop their children off at school. We owe it to the American public to regain their trust in the safety of our bridges and highways.

M. Speaker, the legislation this rule provides for consideration will go a long way to regain that trust from the American people. The legislation authorizes an additional \$1 Billion dollars for bridge repair and replacement, and setting inspection standards for such bridges. It ensures that funds are concentrated on the most pressing bridge safety concerns by mandating that priority bridges be inspected annually and all other bridges biennially.

It also makes clear that these funds must be used in a risk-based priority by prohibiting them from being earmarked, either by Congress or by the Administration. Let me repeat that – funds authorized under this bill cannot be earmarked.

The bill improves bridge safety by requiring States to develop five-year performance plans for inspection and repair of highway bridges, and by establishing bridge management systems to improve the inspection and data collection process. And during consideration of the bill later today, we'll take this critical legislation a step further.

I would also like to take a moment to acknowledge the work of my Republican colleague from Texas, Mr. Conaway and thank him for the opportunity to work with him and Congresswoman Sutton on an amendment that we will offer here today related to rusting and corrosion damage to bridges. Our amendment expresses the sense of Congress that states should prepare corrosion mitigation and prevention plans when planning the construction of new bridges or the rehabilitation of existing bridges.

Our amendment calls attention to a serious problem: many of our nation's bridges are simply rusting away because of corrosion. Many of our bridges have surpassed their initial life

expectancy, yet we rely on them to support another 20, 30, 40 years of travel.

Corrosion is a significant factor in determining the useful life of a bridge. Without preventative measures, water penetrates and corrodes the steel rebar that reinforces our bridges, causing it to swell and fracture the concrete from the inside out. Weather and salt – especially in the Northeast, where we must salt our roads in the winter – cause steel beams to rust and undermine the integrity of the whole structure.

But corrosion can be reduced by using widely available technology and construction methods if they are incorporated into the engineering and design phase of a bridge project. Prevention measures range from simple steps like selecting more resistant building materials, or using coated rebar in concrete structures, to complex methods that cause electrical reactions in water to prevent rust from forming. This sounds complicated, but the same technology is commonly used by the shipbuilding industry to prevent corrosion.

It is much easier and more cost effective to prevent or limit corrosion and rust at the beginning of a project. Corrosion prevention and mitigation plans can cost as little as a few thousand dollars to prepare during the design phase of a bridge project, but they can save municipalities hundreds of millions of dollars down the road in replacement and repair costs; delaying the need for maintenance by a factor of years. Having these plans up front can extend the life of the bridge, thereby saving both lives and millions of dollars in unnecessary repairs. I am hopeful that my colleagues on both sides of the aisle will support the Conaway/Arcuri/Sutton amendment later today.

M. Speaker, we cannot pass up this opportunity. We rely on bridges too much for everyday activities. Thanks to Chairman Oberstar and the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, we can rest a little easier knowing that this legislation will make the bridges on our national highway system much safer.

And with that, I reserve the balance of my time.

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