



C.L. "BUTCH" OTTER
GOVERNOR

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TRANSPORTATION TASK FORCE AFFIRMS NEED; CALLS FOR DELAYING REVENUE ENHANCEMENTS FOR NOW

(BOISE) – Governor C.L. "Butch" Otter welcomed recommendations today from a task force he appointed to study how best to fund Idaho's current and future road and bridge needs. Among its suggestions was delaying implementation of any user-fee increases until Idaho's economy improves.

"Our transportation needs are real and growing, and the safety of Idaho citizens remains one of our highest priorities. But too many people remain jobless, under-employed or on the ragged edge financially to impose higher costs on them right now," Governor Otter said. "I won't ask the Legislature to approve any funding increases in 2011, but the task force has provided us with a path forward while we keep doing all we can to get people back to work by growing our economy."

The Governor's 15-member Task Force on Modernizing Transportation Task Force concluded that:

- Idaho's future economic prosperity is directly tied to an efficient and modern transportation system.
- Without additional revenue, only critical safety and maintenance projects will be completed, leaving no funds for capacity improvements.
- Idaho is a geographically challenged state with a relatively small population – with half as many residents per mile of road as most of our surrounding states.
- Idaho should not count on the federal government to satisfy the state's critical road and bridge needs, and Idaho is at risk of not qualifying for matching federal funds without additional state revenue.
- Delaying critical maintenance will result in higher costs in the future.
- Public transportation is a necessary component to transportation efficiency.

- Costs should be allocated in a fair and competitive manner to all classes of highway users.
- Idaho must continue seeking more modern methods of transportation funding since motor fuel tax collections do not keep up with inflation and do not account for newer vehicles that are either electric or more fuel efficient.

The task force found that new funding for some critical maintenance and safety needs can be temporarily delayed. When conditions warrant increased revenue, the task force concluded that consideration should be given to a wide array of options including, but not limited to, fuel tax increases, registration fee increases and a rental car excise tax. Lieutenant Governor Brad Little, who led the task force, said less traditional revenue sources also should be explored as they become more viable.

The full report will be completed and forwarded to the Governor in December for his consideration.

“The task force concluded there is a substantial need to invest in our transportation system, and it identified methods to pay for it,” the Lieutenant Governor said. “The committee’s diligent work has produced a road map for the Governor and Legislature to consider and act upon.”

The task force was formed 18 months ago. It includes ten legislators and five citizen members representing business, industry and local government.

“Governor Otter and Lieutenant Governor Little continue to provide visionary leadership in the area of transportation,” said Senator John McGee of Caldwell, chairman of the Senate Transportation Committee. “I was pleased to be part of this successful effort.”

House Transportation Committee Chairman, Rep. JoAn Wood of Rigby – also a task force member – praised its work in compiling and prioritizing options for the Legislature.

“The studies are done,” she said. “Now we have our work cut out for us as germane committees.”

The full text of the report and its recommendations will be available in mid- to late December.

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