June 16, 2015

The Honorable Paul Ryan  
Chairman  
The Committee on Ways and Means  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C.

Re: Long-Term Financing of the Highway Trust Fund Hearing – Letter For The Record

Dear Chairman Ryan and Members of the Committee on Ways and Means:

I write on behalf of the Concrete Reinforcing Steel Institute, one of our nation’s oldest technical institutes and a Standards Developing Organization (SDO). The CRSI is recognized as the authoritative resource for steel reinforced concrete construction. Members include some of the country’s largest steel mills, fabricators, material suppliers and placers of steel reinforcing bars and related products. Our Professional members are involved in the research, design, and construction of structures and pavements. Together, they form the backbone of the steel reinforced concrete industry spanning our nation that relies heavily on surface transportation.

As Chairman of CRSI, I am responsible for the well being of the Institute, and to keep apprised of public policy impacts to our industry. Lack of a long-term transportation authorization at sufficient levels of funding impacts not only our industry, but also every business that relies on a well built and maintained transportation system, and disadvantages the country as a whole. As members of Congress, you have the responsibility of providing federal funding for our nation’s surface transportation system.

We believe that the solution to funding is to maintain a user-fee-based Highway Trust Fund with increased levels of investment. We thank you for your attention and urge Congress to pass legislation on this model this year.

Finance and support for our surface transportation systems is based on a per-gallon tax unchanged since 1993. Few of us in the private sector are operating with 22 year old systems or funding mechanisms. No American business or a state Department of Transportation is working with the same W2 numbers from 1993; no business small or large is using the same trucks or machinery from 22 years ago. Our organization and practically every interest from the National Association of Manufacturers to the AFL-CIO recognize the need for an increase in infrastructure investment, and we are willing to pay for an increase in the federal gas fee. We know that you recognize that a safe, efficient system of transport and transit is essential to our economic strength. Tools, personnel and equipment used to make and deliver products require periodic investment – highways and transit are no different.
The user fee assessed at the pump is paid by those who use fuel in proportion to that use. It is a sensible system. Granted, with the improvement in fuel efficiency and other contemporary developments, Congress will in the future need to address other funding mechanisms to meet our infrastructure spending needs. For now we believe the current system is fair and functional.

Many states have raised their fuel fees because they recognize their residents and industries are willing to support a higher level of investment. Leaders in these states have demonstrated they know that a vibrant economy requires investment. This has been the tradition of our federal transportation program since it’s founding – citizens willing to pay.

We have patched, extended, delayed and dallied for far too many months. The country needs a serious, six-year highway authorization bill with funding beyond the clearly inadequate current levels. We need a sustainable funding stream, not obscure "pay-fors" to offset spending or to take revenue from the General Treasury. Highways, transit and bridges take years to plan and build. We cannot do the work with short-term funding band-aids. Congress should not think that status quo is good enough; it’s not.

We urge you to invest in and restore the infrastructure superiority of the United States. Delay will only be more costly and detrimental.

Respectfully submitted,

Scott D. Stevens, PE
Chairman of the Board
Concrete Reinforcing Steel Institute