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Coalition urges county to preserve roads

The nation's vast highway system, a vital component of U.S. economic strength, is steadily deteriorating and a national coalition is urging a change in policy to reverse transportation system failure nationwide. The **Coalition to Preserve America's Roads (CPAR)**, an organization of highway groups working to stop the decline and spiraling reconstruction costs, urges a significant change geared to preserve the system.

"Some states and local agencies are disproportionately devoting their transportation budgets to expanding or rebuilding roads rather than on **pavement preservation** that would preserve and extend their life and save money in the long run," explains Larry Galehouse, Director of the National Center for Pavement Preservation (NCPPI) and CPAR Coordinator. "Preserving the highway system is vital to our country's future and we need to change course now."

CPAR was formed in 2011 to promote road, bridge and highway sustainability. Organizing groups include the AASHTO TSP•2 Regional Partnerships and the NCPPI, along with many industry and related groups concerned about the highway system and its impact on commerce.

As a result of misplaced spending priorities, the nation's roads decline every year, the Federal Highway Administration charges. In 2009, the **American Society of Civil Engineers**

(ASCE) graded the nation's roads a D-, down from a D in 2005. According to FHWA, more than half of US major roads were rated in "fair" or "poor" condition as of 2008.

Sen. Ben Cardin (D-Maryland) introduced legislation in June 2011 that would require the Secretary of Transportation to establish "state of good repair" standards to serve as benchmarks for states to achieve. States would be required to use an "asset management approach" to develop state system preservation and renewal plans. Cardin cited ASCE's 2009 [Report Card for America's Infrastructure](#) as impetus for the legislation.

The nation's highways are valued at approximately \$3 trillion. As responsible stewards of the highway system, present and future generations cannot allow the investment to deteriorate. Every dollar spent on road maintenance avoids \$6 to \$14 of expense later to rebuild a road that has irreparably deteriorated. A more proactive and less reactive approach to addressing pavement needs would result in greater cost savings and satisfaction for taxpaying motorists.

Spending money to keep good roads in good condition is the most cost-effective way to save America's highways. The key is applying the right treatment to the right pavement at the right time, but some road decision makers are deferring maintenance until it is too late. Some agencies, using "worst first" policies to try to stretch their limited budgets, are actually costing their cities, counties and states enormously more in the long run. Over time, keeping a mile of road in good condition can be achieved at substantially less than half the cost of letting that road deteriorate and then making major repairs – a wasteful practice that for too long has been common at the federal, state and local levels.

A pavement preservation program that promotes road sustainability consists of three components: preventive maintenance, minor rehabilitation (non-structural), and some routine maintenance activities. Examples of typical pavement preservation treatments, depending on the

type of pavement, include crack sealing and filling, slurry seals, ultra-thin overlays, joint resealing, undersealing, and diamond grooving or grinding.

The concept is simple: Just as regular exercise and proper nutrition stave off serious health problems in people, so regular maintenance avoids the necessity for costly future road repairs. Practicing triage with our roads is irresponsible. It's like waiting until most of the patients are nearly dead and then trying to save a paltry few with the most expensive surgery possible.

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