



November 1, 2005

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The Honorable Christopher "Kit" Bond
Chairman
Subcommittee on Transportation, Treasury, the Judiciary,
and Housing and Urban Development
SD-133 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Facsimile: (202) 224-4401

Dear Mr. Chairman:

On behalf of the Weather Coalition, a diverse group of representatives from industry, academia, and scientific associations (list attached), we write in reference to funding for the Road Weather Research Program that is included at \$5 million annually in the Safe, Accountable, Flexible and Efficient Transportation Equity Act. **As you and your colleagues discuss language for a final FY 2006 Transportation Appropriations Bill, we urge you to retain the Road Weather Research Program as a peer-reviewed, competitive grants program as originally intended.** The program has been expanded in response to recommendations of the National Academies of Science (NAS) and broad support from the communities involved with transportation safety and weather hazards.

The "requirements" in the authorization language read:

The program established under this section shall solely carry out research and development called for in the National Research Council's report entitled "A Research Agenda for Improving Road Weather Services". Such research and development includes—

- (1) integrating existing observational networks and data management systems for road weather applications;*
- (2) improving weather modeling capabilities and forecast tools, such as the road surface and atmospheric interface;*
- (3) enhancing mechanisms for communicating road weather information to users, such as transportation officials and the public; and*
- (4) integrating road weather technologies into an information infrastructure.*

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, each year in the U.S. approximately 7,000 highway deaths and 800,000 injuries are caused by weather-related driving conditions. In addition, poor weather results in a \$42 billion economic toll on the U.S. economy. To significantly improve highway system safety, capacity, and efficiency, new decision support systems integrating weather and road conditions are required. Such systems are essential tools for managers and planners responsible for traffic management, crash mitigation, winter maintenance, highway operations, and emergency management. The Road Weather Research Program will provide results to create and support those systems.

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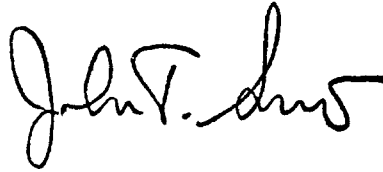
In order to make the most efficient and effective use of funding for the Road Weather Research Program, it should be open to input from stakeholders from the broad community. The Secretary should be free to consult with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the National Science Foundation, the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials, nonprofit organizations, academia, and the private sector. The input and involvement of experts in the broad community will leverage the Federal investment and produce the most desirable results in service to the nation's citizens. Again, we urge you to retain the program as open and competitive as originally intended.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'RJB', with a large, stylized initial 'R' and a smaller 'J' and 'B' following.

Ray J. Ban
Executive Vice President
The Weather Channel

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John T. Snow', with a large, stylized initial 'J' and 'S'.

John T. Snow
Director, Oklahoma Weather Center
and Dean, College of Geosciences at
The University of Oklahoma

Co-Chairs of the Weather Coalition

cc: Senator Wayne Allard