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### Agricultural Exemption Unscathed In Highway Bill Draft

House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure Chairman James L. Oberstar (D-Minn.) today announced the release of a white paper to outline plans for the new surface transportation authorization bill. There have been calls by some organizations to remove all industry and state-specific exemptions to hours of service, including the agricultural exemption to hours of service (Ag HOS). These exemptions were left untouched in the white paper. The legal language of the draft bill has not yet been made available and it will be examined closely once it is.

The authorization bill is currently being drafted and will replace the current authorization, SAFETEA-LU, which is due to expire on Sept. 30. Oberstar has promised that the new authorization will transform the way the federal government invests highway, safety and transit funds.

The white paper was made available on the Committee's website and is attached here.

Hours of Service is addressed on page 78, but there is no mention of exemptions.

Other items that may be of some interest from an agriculture or rural perspective are:

- Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) Funds -- Eliminates the existing set-asides of dedicated portions of HSIP funding for use on highway-rail crossings and high risk rural roads, freeing States to use funding strategically in the areas of greatest safety need, consistent with their HSIP plans, and to obligate HSIP funds more easily. See page 22.
- Surface Transportation Program (STP) Funds -- Requires States to consult with rural planning organizations prior to using suballocated STP funds in areas that such organizations represent. See page 28.
- Electronic Logging -- Requires the Secretary of Transportation to prescribe rules to require all commercial motor vehicles used by a motor carrier subject to hours of service regulations to be equipped with electronic logging devices, commonly know as electronic onboard recorders (EOBRs). This required use of EOBRs should not apply when operating under under the Ag HOS exemption. See Page 78.