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Principles for Infrastructure Stimulus Investment

The current recession has put hundreds of thousands of Americans out of work and left critical infrastructure improvements across the country incomplete. The American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) strongly supports the ambitious plan proposed by President-elect Barack Obama to combat unemployment and foster continued economic growth through infrastructure investment. This investment will create and sustain jobs, and begin to address the nation's crumbling infrastructure if appropriately applied to areas that most require federal support. As an important step to bolstering our nation's economic stability, this short-term stimulus package must supplement, rather than replace, long-term solutions such as regular appropriations and scheduled reauthorizations that will ultimately restore America's world-class infrastructure.

ASCE has long been an advocate for improving and maintaining the nation's infrastructure. The last ASCE Report Card for America's Infrastructure, issued in 2005, rated the overall condition of the nation's infrastructure a grade of "D" and recommended spending \$1.6 trillion over five years to bring the condition up to an acceptable level. Since that time federal funding has fallen far below that recommended level, and early indications are that the grades will not be markedly improved for the 2009 Report Card, which will be released on March 25, 2009.

ASCE believes that all projects supported by an economic stimulus investment must meet the following fundamental criteria:

- Projects must create and sustain employment increases;
- Investments must provide long term benefits to the public (such as congestion relief);
- Long term maintenance and upkeep needs of all infrastructure projects – existing and new – must be taken into account; and
- To ensure accountability and transparency an auditing program must be established to review the program and measure desired outcomes.

As the investments are made, proper attention must be paid to the prioritization and selection of these projects to ensure that the criteria are met. The following principles should guide selection decisions:

- The project should deliver measurable improvements in public health, safety and quality of life;
- The project should provide substantial, broad-based economic benefit;
- The project should be designed and built in a sustainable and cost-effective manner, and proper consideration must be given to life-cycle costs; and
- The project should have a significant environmental benefit such as area restoration, improved air quality through reduced congestion and better watershed management through eliminating vulnerabilities in a system.

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