

CASTLE BILL AIMS TO KEEP AMERICANS FROM WASTING BILLIONS OF GALLONS OF FUEL IN TRAFFIC -- July 8, 2008

Legislation would work to reduce traffic delay at congestion chokepoints in Delaware and across the country

Wilmington, DE -- Today, Delaware Congressman Mike Castle was joined by Transportation Management Association (TMA) of Delaware at AAA Mid-Atlantic's Wilmington headquarters to introduce legislation that would alleviate heavy congestion at chokepoints across the country. During a time of rising gas prices and economic concern across the country, this legislation, the National Highway Congestion Chokepoint Relief Act, would reduce the amount of fuel wasted by lessening traffic delays. A 2007 report by the U.S. Department of Transportation says Americans lose 4.2 billion hours and 2.9 billion gallons of fuel sitting in traffic jams each year. On the stretch of I-95 through Delaware, commuters spend approximately 111,000 hours and 70,000 gallons of fuel sitting in delays, which amounts to approximately \$2 million every year. Rep. Castle believes that as more new residents move into New Castle and Kent counties, coupled with the expansion of Aberdeen Proving Ground in Maryland, it is clear that congestion will increasingly choke our roadways unless we act now.

In February, Rep. Castle introduced a two-step plan to address congestion in the northeast corridor. The first step calls for the completion of the I-95 Turnpike Improvement Project, which includes improving the I-95 and State Route 1 interchange, adding a fifth lane to I-95 in each direction, and installing EZ pass speed lanes at the Newark toll plaza. The second piece of this plan is coming full-circle today with the introduction of the National Highway Congestion Chokepoint Relief Act.

"With about 230,000 vehicles traveling I-95 daily, it is no wonder Delaware has often been referred to as 'The East Coast's Main Street,'" Rep. Castle said. "Delaware sits at the crossroads of the northeast corridor and will continue to be heavily utilized. The legislation I am introducing today would establish 'national chokepoint regions' in the most congested areas of the country and require the Secretary of Transportation to develop a plan for allocating funds to eligible highway projects. The criteria for spending highway money would be based on the hours of delays, wasted fuel per traveler, and proximity to ports, airports, and tourism destinations. The language of this bill also will help to ensure we prioritize our limited resources to focus more funding on the most congested chokepoints around the country. Furthermore, dealing with the costs of congestion requires that we also must invest in alternatives to traditional highway travel and groups like TMA are crucial in this effort. This legislation calls for the alternatives to highway travel, which groups like TMA already work to utilize, by supporting rail, staggered work hour initiatives, ridesharing, HOV lanes, and telecommuting.

"This requires cooperation between Democrats, Republicans, and the Administration to reform the way we fund high priority transportation projects at the national level. My co-author on this bill, Congressman Michael Capuano of Massachusetts, comes from the northern part of the I-95 corridor near Boston, which represents a transportation chokepoint similar to the one we struggle through everyday here in Delaware. We realize this is not just a problem in the northeast and believe this legislation will be effective in alleviating the notoriously heavy traffic congestion in places like Los Angeles and Chicago as well. Cutting travel delays will save commuters time and money - and with gas prices above \$4 a gallon it is vital that Congress take action now."

