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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Rahall Transportation Institute's (RTI) Transportation Workforce Summit Looks for Solutions to Statewide Workforce Shortage, Oct. 28-31, 2008, at Tamarack Conference Center;

Speakers include Gov. Joe Manchin and U.S. Rep. Nick J. Rahall, II

Beckley, W.VA. – Transportation workforce professionals will convene with educators from West Virginia's universities, community and technical colleges, vocational training centers, workforce development boards, private employers and other groups to address how they may solve transportation workforce shortages throughout the State, October 29-31, 2008.

The conference, which is presented by the Nick J. Rahall, II Appalachian Transportation Institute (RTI), takes place at Tamarack Conference Center in Beckley, W.Va., and is based on a 2007 study completed by RTI, which determined that by 2011, nearly half (43%) of workers employed by the West Virginia Department of Transportation (WVDOT) will be eligible for retirement. In addition, the WVDOT is experiencing an increasing difficulty in attracting and retaining new employees. The purpose of the conference is to bring together educators, trainers and employers, to find preliminary solutions to the workforce shortage.

U.S. Rep. Nick J. Rahall, II, said, "RTI has already contributed to inventories, capacity and sustainability assessments of our State's transportation infrastructure, including the Workforce Development

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Study on which this summit is based. As everyone here already knows, the challenges of solving our problems in transportation workforce development are great, but not impossible. To get our State's system back on track, we must do more than talk about the problems. We must bring stakeholders together to talk about solutions—and that's why this summit is so important.”

RT Director Bob Plymale said, “because of the importance of maintaining existing and building new transportation infrastructure throughout our mountainous region, I thank each educator, employer and trainer for attending this summit with the purpose of finding solutions and fostering economic development in West Virginia.”

A panel of private employers convenes Wednesday, October 29, 2008, from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. discuss the preparation and training of new engineers. A reception sponsored by the Contractor's Association of West Virginia begins at 5 p.m., during which Plymale, Rahall, Gov. Joe Manchin and Clark Martin of the Federal Highways Association will speak before 2008 retirees are honored.

The conference begins Thursday, October 30, at 8:30 a.m. with a welcome by Plymale and an overview by RTI Workforce Development Director Diana Long. At 10 a.m., presentations by representatives from the road, river and rail industries will begin. Instant audience participant polling, which measures responses and potential solutions, takes place from 11:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. On Friday, October 31, 2008, Recommendations and outcomes will be presented to WV Panel of Policy Makers beginning at 8:30 a.m. An invited panel, which consists of West Virginia government leaders, transportation workforce leaders and higher education professionals begins at 10 a.m. The conference ends at 11:30 a.m.

For more information, contact Errin Jewell, Public Affairs Specialist at 304-687-3353 or jewell4@njrati.org, or Dr. Diana Long, Transportation Workforce Development Specialist, 304-542-3303 or longd@njrati.org.

“Building Jobs through Transportation”

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