



## United States Senate Budget Committee

**JEFF SESSIONS | Ranking Member**

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# Devil In The Details: Sessions Criticizes Mystery Funding In Obama Transportation Plan

**WASHINGTON—U.S. Sen. Jeff Sessions (R-AL), Ranking Member of the Senate Budget Committee, submitted the following statement at today’s hearing to consider the Department of Transportation’s FY 2012 budget request, which increases spending by 62 percent and assumes \$435 billion in additional, unexplained revenue:**

“Thank you, Secretary LaHood, for joining us today as we examine the president’s budget and his request for a stunning 62-percent increase in transportation funding.

As you know, we are faced with a growing fiscal crisis. We are out of money. We’re borrowing forty cents of every dollar we spend. Our deficit this year is projected to reach \$1.65 trillion. And yet this is the third day in a row that a member of the president’s administration has come before this committee to request a substantial increase in his department’s budget. These requests are simply disconnected from reality. Listening to them you would think we were experiencing a budget surplus, not a staggering deficit.

All across the country families are tightening their belts in the face of tough economic times. The federal government must do the same. No agency should be exempt. Every department of government must closely examine its budget and find ways to do more with less. Our severe fiscal challenges present an opportunity to make government leaner, more productive, and less expensive. It is an opportunity we must seize.

Unlike so much of what Washington does with taxpayer money, transportation is a legitimate and necessary function of government. Good roads are tangible long-term assets that enhance productivity.

The tragedy is that there was a great opportunity to advance our highway system as part of the so-called stimulus package. Instead, nearly one trillion dollars was frittered away on a failed jobs plan that succeeded only in sinking our nation dramatically deeper into debt.

It is terribly sad that the Obama Administration has only now placed such apparent urgency on transportation spending, given what occurred with the stimulus package. The president said the money would be used to repair our nation's infrastructure. But only a meager five percent of stimulus funds were directed to roads and bridges. Clearly, the stated infrastructure goal was not met.

And now this budget will further undermine America's infrastructure by using foreign loans to pay for costly and unnecessary projects—such as high speed rail—while the Highway Trust Fund remains empty.

Where do you propose to get the funding for these projects? Are we to simply keep borrowing until our credit runs out? Are you truly unable to trim your budget and focus your spending priorities?

We cannot rely on China to pay for roads and bridges in America.

I am aware that the Administration argues that many of the projects in this budget are actually paid for. But these claims rely on a big gimmick.

This year we will spend \$43 billion out of the Highway Trust Fund but take in only \$36 billion. And over the next ten years, if we just maintain the spending level under the current Continuing Resolution, we expect to spend about \$140 billion more than comes in. This means the General Fund will have to continue to bail out the Highway Trust Fund, just as it has the past few years. Since there is no money for the General Fund, this means more borrowing and more debt.

So, we can't even pay for our baseline, but the Administration proposes a huge spending increase with no real plan to pay for it. You assume \$435 billion in new

money over the next ten years in magic revenue. You have said this revenue is not from a gas tax increase. Where is it from, then?

This is the sort of Washington-style accounting that got us in this fix in the first place. So let me clear up any confusion: Congress is not going to pass a half-trillion dollar mystery tax increase.

We need fact-based budgeting, not fantasy budgeting. Frankly, I have been troubled by how the White House has continued to spin the plain facts.

Here is how the president described his budget to the American people:

“What my budget does is to put forward some tough choices, some significant spending cuts so that by the middle of this decade our annual spending will match our annual revenues. We will not be adding more to the national debt.”

The reality is the exact opposite: the president’s budget increases spending every single year, doubles our national debt, and never once produces a deficit less than \$600 billion dollars.

In fact, so much new debt is accumulated under the president’s plan that our annual debt interest payments will rise to \$844 billion dollars by the end of the decade. We will be spending seven times more on interest than on transportation. These staggering interest payments will crowd out all other priorities. By failing to make tough decisions today we are sacrificing the future, not investing in it. If we follow the president’s budget we will leave our children—and the world—with an America that is weaker and diminished.

If we want to strengthen America and create jobs, then we will have to restrain government spending and climb out from under this mountain of debt.

It’s not an easy road, but it’s the right road. It’s the road that leads to a better future.”



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