

WASHINGTON, D.C. – U.S. Rep. Harry Mitchell today called for swift passage of H.R. 3248, a technical corrections bill to the 2005 highway bill.

The bill contains a change sought by Mitchell to allow Arizona to receive a higher federal share for certain highway projects to which it should have originally been entitled. It has been cleared by House Leadership, which has advised members that it could come for a vote on the House floor as soon as today.

“This is a matter of basic fairness,” said Mitchell. “States with large amounts of public lands are supposed to receive a higher federal share for federally funded highway projects. That’s not happening in our case. Arizona is third in the nation in the acreage of public lands in our state, but our share of funding does not reflect that. That’s just not right.”

Mitchell was appointed to serve on a House-Senate conference committee, which convened last week to consider the formula.

As a result of that conference, a technical corrections bill, H.R. 3248, was introduced late last night, which includes a significant change to federal highway law suggested by Mitchell.

Arizona Left Out of Key Provision of Last Highway Bill

In 2005, when the previous Congress passed the last highway bill, it allowed only six states – Alaska, Montana, Nevada, North Dakota, Oregon and South Dakota – to receive a higher federal share for certain federally funded highway projects. Arizona was left off of the list.

If passed, H.R. 3248, would eliminate this list entirely, allowing Arizona and other states with large amounts of public lands, to receive the higher federal shares to which they should be entitled.

Costs for federally funded highway projects are typically shared among federal, state and local sources. Without eligibility for a higher federal share, Arizona’s cost-share triples from 5.7 percent to 20 percent, costing our state and local governments millions of dollars for projects across the state.

At the time the 2005 highway bill was drafted, Arizona was not represented on the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure. Mitchell now serves on that committee.

In that capacity, Mitchell recently offered an amendment to enable Arizona to begin receiving a higher federal share when a highways technical corrections bill came before the committee.

In response to Mitchell’s amendment, Committee Chairman James Oberstar of Minnesota, committed to working with Mitchell on this issue when it reached a House-Senate conference committee.

“I am grateful for Chairman Oberstar’s help,” said Mitchell. “I urge my colleagues to approve H.R. 3248 as soon as possible.”