

Ga. bus accident underscores need for increased safety measures on intercity, charter and tour buses

March 6, 2007

Press Release | Contact: Danielle Langone (202) 225-6416

WASHINGTON, DC—In light of the recent bus accident in Georgia which killed six people and injured 29, Congressman Peter DeFazio (D-Ore.) announced today that the House Highways and Transit Subcommittee will hold a hearing to investigate the need for Congress to increase the safety of motorcoaches, including requiring seatbelts to be installed on intercity, charter and tour buses. DeFazio has long felt seatbelts should be required on buses.

“The federal government has a vital and historic role in ensuring our roads and highways remain as safe as possible,” DeFazio said. “Mandating seatbelts be installed in our passenger vehicles has proven to be a highly successful safety measure. However, there's no law requiring intercity, charter and tour buses to have seatbelts.

“Though we do not know for certain how many injuries or deaths were related to the lack of seatbelts on the charter bus accident in Georgia, we do know that in the past decade, there have been a large number of survivable accidents and preventable injuries that might have been avoided had seatbelts been available to bus passengers.

“Last week's tragedy highlights the need for Congress to step in where federal safety regulators have not, and address the overdue need for seatbelts on intercity, charter and tour buses. The European Union and Australia already require seatbelts to be installed in motorcoaches; the U.S. should follow suit.”

In 1999, the National Transportation Safety Board released a Bus Crash Worthiness Report in which it recommended that the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration develop occupant protection systems for motor coach passengers. This recommendation is still on the

NTSB's Most Wanted list.

The hearing will take place later this month. Exact time and date of the hearing will be announced this week.