



ASSOCIATION OF
EQUIPMENT MANUFACTURERS

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CONTACT: [Rick Bourgoise](#), Stratacomm, 248.824.8210

[Karah Street](#), Stratacomm, 313.999.3038

**STALLED EQUIPMENT WORKERS 'START THINGS UP' AT SOLDIER FIELD:
"START US UP USA!" CAMPAIGN AIMS FOR TRANSPORTATION INVESTMENTS, JOBS**
Caravan of Construction Equipment Urges Federal Government to Stop Job Loss

CHICAGO – *Start Us Up USA!*, a nationwide grassroots campaign of the construction equipment industry and their allies, visited Chicago today with a rally of local business and labor leaders and construction workers calling on the federal government to move quickly on the reauthorization of a critical transportation bill. New transportation funding is necessary to improve our nation's infrastructure and spur a recovery of the construction equipment industry, especially in hard-hit states like Illinois. The rally was followed by a caravan of construction equipment, idled by the lack of federal support, parading around Soldier Field to urge the federal government to stop job loss.

"The construction equipment industry is in a deep depression and we have lost 33,000 jobs in Illinois and 37 percent of our workforce nationwide the past few years," said Toby Mack, President and CEO of the Oak Brook, Ill.-based Associated Equipment Distributors. Dennis Slater, President of the Association of Equipment Manufacturers added: "More jobs are at stake in Chicagoland, throughout Illinois and across the country as time is running out for the men and women of the construction and equipment industries without long-term federal transportation investment." AEM and AED are co-leading the *Start Us Up USA!* campaign.

Illinois is among the ten hardest hit states in the nation according to new research released by IHS Global Insight in September. While the recession abates for some sectors of the U.S. economy, the construction equipment industry remains stalled. Since 2006, the state of Illinois has lost nearly \$9.5 billion worth of economic output from the construction industry. The research also found:

- Job losses in this sector are significantly worse than other industries – like auto and finance – that have received government bailouts.
- Two out of every 25 jobs lost during the current recession (or eight percent) can be traced to this downturn in the construction equipment industry.
- The main culprit is a more than 50 percent drop in construction equipment spending since its peak in 2006, which coincides with declining infrastructure investment this decade.

Diane Benck, Vice President of General Operations for West Side Tractor Sales Co. in Naperville, Illinois, a mainstay in the Chicagoland community since 1962, attests to the challenges the industry is facing: "Industry-wide sales have decreased 50 percent since its peak in 2006. This is the first time we've seen conditions this poor and it has been difficult to watch the toll this recession has taken on our employees." Her company is typical of so many others in the industry.

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At the rally, Jerry Roper, President and CEO of the Chicagoland Chamber of Commerce and Dennis Gannon, President of the Chicago Federation of Labor, lent their support to the *Start Us Up USA!* campaign. Following formal remarks, a caravan of idle construction equipment including a motor grader, rough terrain forklift and hydraulic scissor lift, fired up their engines and took their message to Chicago-area locals and visitors around the museum campus with banners saying “It’s Time To Start Us Up USA!” and “The recession is a construction equipment depression.”

Start Us Up USA! is rallying support for swift U.S. congressional action on a new multi-year reauthorization bill for critical infrastructure projects. Improvement projects gives communities more transit options, safer roads, improves congested roads and decreases greenhouse gases while providing millions of good-paying construction jobs.

The transportation funding expired on September 30, and critical infrastructure projects like the Eisenhower Expressway Expansion Project need this federal support to proceed in the coming years. According to recent data from The Road Information Program (TRIP), 43 percent of Illinois’ major urban highways are congested and 34 percent of the state’s major roads are in poor or mediocre condition. Travel on Illinois highways has increased by 29 percent since 2007.

In addition, the reauthorization is critical to numerous improvements that are part of the Chicago Region Environmental and Transportation Efficiency (CREATE) program to reduce railroad bottlenecks and congestion, shorten commute times and reclaim Chicago’s position as the intermodal capital of North America. According to CREATE, if infrastructure issues and rail capacity are not addressed, the Chicago region is at risk to lose 17,000 jobs and \$2 billion in annual economic production within two decades.

At the *Start Us Up USA!* campaign website – www.StartUsUpUSA.com – visitors can find the latest information, share stories on how the construction equipment depression has affected them, post photos and videos, and learn how they can help.

This is the second grassroots event that equipment industry workers and leaders have organized across the country. The campaign moves next to Washington, D.C. on Wednesday, October 28th with a rally on Capitol Hill.

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The Association of Equipment Manufacturers (www.aem.org) is the North American-based international trade association for the off-road equipment manufacturing industry serving the construction, agriculture, forestry, mining and utility markets. AEM is headquartered in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, with offices in Washington, D.C., Ottawa, Beijing and a European presence in Brussels. It represents more than 800 companies.

The Associated Equipment Distributors (www.aednet.org) is an international trade association representing companies involved in the distribution, rental and support of equipment used in construction, mining, forestry, power generation, agriculture and industrial applications.