

Policy Resolution PR-7-09
Title: American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials
Position Statement on Federal Surface Transportation Program Authorization

AASHTO extends its appreciation to Congress for the transfer of resources from the General Fund to the Highway Trust Fund in Fiscal Years 2008 and 2009 sufficient to maintain the solvency of the Highway Trust Fund through October, 2009. We support the transfer of such additional resources as are necessary to maintain Highway Trust Fund solvency until the revenue increase required to sustain the surface transportation program can be enacted.

A six-year authorization of federal highway and transit programs, from date of enactment, must be enacted as soon as possible to avoid disruption to state transportation programs, to protect and create jobs, and to facilitate multi-year planning, programming and infrastructure investment.

The next authorization bill must generate substantial new revenues to address documented needs for highways, transit, intercity passenger rail, and freight. We support the \$500 billion funding level included in the House bill. The bill's inclusion of \$50 billion for Intercity Passenger Rail is consistent with AASHTO's call for Congress to fund a fast and reliable national intercity passenger rail network, comparable to world-class systems in other countries.

To meet the demand for transit in both urban and rural areas we support doubling transit ridership over the next twenty years since transit will play an increasingly important role in meeting future transportation needs. Highways will continue to be the primary mode of transportation for both people and freight throughout the United States. Therefore, AASHTO supports proportionate increases in highway and transit funding that recognizes the resources which both modes will require to meet both rural and urban transportation needs.

National objectives and performance measures should be developed collaboratively by the U.S. DOT and State DOTs to bring focus and accountability for results to the program. To further that goal the legislation should authorize a state-driven performance management process to establish targets through which each state does its part to achieve national objectives.

In order to meet the national objectives, the legislation should continue flexibility for states to effectively use federal funds, including, but not limited to the ability to transfer funds between highway program elements, and to make modal, and project and program funding decisions that best meet the unique needs of each state. The legislation should not subject a larger portion of the Surface Transportation Program to geographic restrictions, or impose additional restrictions on eligible uses of Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Program funds.

Federal transportation dollars should be targeted to achieve national objectives through projects that best meet community needs. To do this, 90 percent of federal highway funds should be apportioned by formula to states to be spent according to priorities established by states in cooperation with their Metropolitan Planning Organizations.

Distributing more than 10 percent of transportation assistance through discretionary programs with projects selected by the United States Department of Transportation to meet national or urban needs, may restrict the ability of many states to participate, disadvantage rural areas, and limit the program's ability to achieve an equitable distribution of funds among all states.

Based on decades of success in the development of the nation's surface transportation system, a federally-assisted, state-administered approach to deliver the federal surface transportation program should be continued in a manner such that the role and authority of states is enhanced, not diminished, compared to present law.

The United States is growing and will continue to grow. Upgrading the existing National Highway System (NHS) to a good state of repair, including improvements to deficient bridges, pavements and interchanges should be a top national priority. Increasing NHS capacity to address conditions that undermine the efficient and economic functioning of the system, including future growth projections, should be an integral part of the authorization. Highway investment is vital to support economic growth and development, especially so in the less populated areas of the country.

To provide for congestion relief and metropolitan mobility, funding for metropolitan areas should be increased by expanding the size of the federal program, and the creation of a new, apportioned Operations and Management Program. AASHTO supports funding a program to encourage coordination of transportation and land use at \$100

million per year, and supports the encouragement of a collaborative “Complete Streets” approach, where appropriate, to roadway improvements.

To insure that annual highway fatalities continue to decline, current safety programs of FHWA, NHTSA, and FMCSA must be continued and strengthened, and safety funding assistance to the states increased.

U.S. DOT and State DOTs in partnership with cities, counties, MPOs, ports, freight shippers, freight carriers, and other stakeholders should develop a National Multimodal Freight Strategic Plan. Funding from new freight-based user fees or other appropriate revenue sources should be provided to carry out the plan.

Congress needs to increase revenues for the Highway Trust Fund at levels that can sustain the highway and transit assistance at the amounts needed to achieve national objectives. If Congress decides that user fees should not be increased until the economy has recovered from the current downturn, interim funding should be provided that continues highway and transit funding assistance at levels that sustain or exceed current spending. This will assure that transportation investment continues to play a critical role in supporting national economic recovery.

Proof of concept testing and planning for the transition to a distance-based fee and other next-generation financing method should be funded.

Where appropriate and in the public interest, the use of toll financing, congestion pricing, public-private partnerships, and other innovative practices should be encouraged and permitted. To help States, cities and counties fund their share of national transportation improvements, proceeds from toll financing should be reinvested in transportation improvements.

We support the House proposal to create an Office of Project Delivery Expediting to streamline the reporting process and to reduce multiple agency reports and reporting redundancies. Important strides to improve the environmental review and approval process for transportation projects, without diluting federal environmental protections, should be continued and enhanced. Further process reforms are necessary to reduce the average 13 years it takes to complete a transportation improvement project.

If new surface transportation legislation requires that States and MPOs through their transportation plans must set targets for greenhouse gas reduction and strategies to achieve those targets, any rules or technical guidance for such planning from the EPA Administrator must be approved by the U.S. Secretary of Transportation.

The nation's transportation system faces 21st century problems. New solutions need to be found through research, embracing new technology and methods. A strong federal partnership with adequate funding is needed.

BE IT RESOLVED, that the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials urges the U.S. Congress to enact a robust, multi-year authorization of federal surface transportation programs as quickly as possible, respecting the constitutional role of the states to act in the best interests of its citizens.