

Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations (AMPO)

Priorities for FAST Act Reauthorization

FIX THE HIGHWAY TRUST FUND & PROVIDE A LONG-TERM REVENUE SOLUTION FOR THE FEDERAL SHARE OF TRANSPORTATION

Address the solvency of the HTF before the FAST Act expires in 2020. Grow Federal Highway and Transit programs with sustainable dedicated funding source. It has now been close to a quarter century since revenue for the Federal Highway Trust Fund was last increased. For the last decade, general fund revenues and other financing techniques have been used to patch the widening shortfall. Identify a long-term, sustainable revenue source to provide certainty that funding will be available in the future to meet the federal share of projects and programs that have been publicly vetted and reviewed in the metropolitan planning process. With additional funding these projects can be quickly accelerated through project delivery.

INCREASE FEDERAL INVESTMENT IN TRANSPORTATION

Increase federal funding to address the backlog of maintenance and to meet the needs of the future surface transportation network. Oppose the inclusion of any future rescissions of highway apportionments. The transportation system is aging and needs significant maintenance and rehabilitation in order to prevent closures or failures of the system. In addition, construction costs continue to rise, making transportation improvements more expensive. Although low-cost improvements have been made, numerous capacity projects have become increasingly complex and costly, necessitating an increase in the federal investment commensurate with increased funding that state and local governments have contributed.

INCREASE PLANNING FUNDS FOR METROPOLITAN PLANNING TO MEET FEDERAL PLANNING REQUIREMENTS

Increase metropolitan planning funds to Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) to meet the additional requirements that Congress has required in past legislation. Increase the federal share of planning funds. MAP-21 and the FAST Act require MPOs, states, and providers of public transportation to conduct performance-based planning, which requires additional data collection, modeling, studies, and in some case additional staff or consultants which increases the cost of planning. As technology innovations begin to deploy MPOs will need to account and plan for these new investments. We request 1.25 percent of the federal-aid highway program and continue to set-aside planning funds under the National Highway Freight program. Require states to coordinate with MPOs in the development of the formula to distribute planning funds within the states. With each US Census, more MPOs are created. More MPOs will be anticipated following the 2020 Census. When new MPOs are created without new revenue for metropolitan planning, each MPO receives less funding to perform planning functions.

ALLOCATE STBGP FUNDS TO ALL MPOs REGARDLESS OF POPULATION

Allocate Surface Transportation Block Grant (STBGP) funds to all MPOs, regardless of population. For decades, MPOs have played a vital role in developing current and future transportation plans and in determining transportation investments in urbanized areas. With the new Federal Performance Based Planning and Programming requirements enacted as part of MAP-21, MPOs are now responsible for ensuring that the National Priorities identified by Congress are addressed in their Metropolitan region. MPOs need project selection authority, including direct allocation of STBG funding to carry out this Congressional mandate. Require states and MPOs under 200,000 in population to jointly develop a formula to disperse apportionments.

INCREASE THE SHARE OF STBGP APPORTIONMENT TO LOCAL JURISDICTIONS

Increase the percent share of funding allocated by population under the Surface Transportation Block Grant Program (STBGP). MAP-21 lowered the percentage share of STBGP allocated by population to 50% and the FAST Act gradually increased the share (rising to 55% in 2020) over the life of the Act. We request the next authorization bill increase the allocation to MPOs to 65% or higher. ~~restore the share to 62.5 percent which was the share prior MAP-21.~~ Require this calculation to be made prior to any set-asides under the program. MPO's not only plan for needs in their existing urbanized area, they also are required under law to plan for expected growth 20 years into the future. Increasing funds will allow MPO boards to make infrastructure investment decisions that will generate economic opportunities, reduce crashes and fatalities, reduce congestion, and improve the quality of life for those living, commuting, and working in these areas.

IMPROVE PROJECT SELECTION AUTHORITY AND LOCAL GOVERNANCE ON MPO BOARDS

Amend Title 23 to give all MPOs decision making authority on which transportation projects should be funded in their planning areas. Currently only MPOs serving a population over 200,000 are permitted to select federally funded projects from their own list of developed and approved projects. All other MPOs' (50,000-199,999) highway projects are selected by the state in cooperation with the MPO. Amend the law to allow MPOs under 200,000 in population to select their federally funded projects unless an MPOs choose to continue with current law letting the state cooperatively select highway projects. States should be prohibited from determining the size of an MPO board or, the number of voting board members.

SUPPORT CONTINUED DEVELOPMENT OF MULTI-MODAL NATIONAL FREIGHT NETWORK WITH DEDICATED FUNDING

Support continued development of the multi-modal National Freight Network funded by a dedicated revenue stream. Freight planning is an important component of statewide and metropolitan transportation planning processes. Input from a variety of public and private stakeholders—State DOTs, MPOs, freight modes, general public—must be considered to successfully integrate freight planning into these existing transportation planning processes. AMPO asks that all partners, including MPOs, to the maximum extent practicable, be in the decision-making process designating freight corridors and in investment decisions. Freight moves to, from and through metropolitan areas, as the majority of products are destined for these regions. For that reason, MPOs should be more involved in developing freight plans in conjunction with state DOTs. MPOs better understand the transportation facilities in their region and know the freight stakeholders so can better reflect and plan for the unique needs of the region.

POLICY, PLANNING FACTORS, DEVELOPMENT OF THE PLAN, PUBLICATION, CONGESTION MANAGEMENT, FINANCIAL PLAN, and CERTIFICATION

- Update MPO policy to reflect emerging transportation modes, technology and delivery applications.
- Make clear that drainage projects to reduce flooding on federal-aid eligible roadways are an eligible expense of federal dollars which is consistent with the planning factors that MPOs must consider in the metropolitan planning process.
- In addition to MPO websites encourage the use of social media platforms for the publication of plans and TIPs. Print news should remain an optional method of publication and not a requirement if electronic sources fulfill the publication requirement.
- Expand eligibility for the Safe Routes to School Program - The Safe Routes to School Program promotes walking and bicycling to school through infrastructure improvements, enforcement, tools, safety education, and incentives to encourage walking and bicycling to school. As it currently stands, the program only benefits children in primary and middle schools - up to eighth grade. We believe the program should apply through twelfth grade so that it may enable and encourage high school students to walk and bike to school.
- Make the year of expenditure (YOE) requirement an optional activity in the plan. For the purpose of developing the transportation plan, the MPO, transit operator, and State shall cooperatively develop estimates of funds that will be available to support plan implementation, making the plan more flexible, and

limits the numbers of amendments. If all projects are “equal” by not listing the order of implementation, then all projects are equal in their ability to advance. Allow MPOs the option to continue to use YOY figures or permit MPOs to calculate all projects in present day costs to provide flexibility in advancing projects from the outer years (10-20) of the plan to take advantage of additional, unforeseen, funding that may become available post adoption of the TIP and Plan. In lieu of legislating this provision, direct the Secretary of USDOT to change the regulations to permit MPOs the flexibility.

- Require federal certification of the planning process every five years instead of 4. This will save resources and may lead to better outcomes. - Amend the law (23 USC, Section 134(k)(5)(A0(ii)) and strike “4” and insert “5.”

EMPOWER HIGH-PERFORMING MPOS WITH INCREASED RESPONSIBILITIES, SUPPORTING LOCAL CONTROL AND DECISION-MAKING.

Locally elected officials and regional transportation policy boards are the closest to the highway trust funds taxpayers and best understand a region’s priority needs. Establish a Pilot Program for High-Performing MPOs that demonstrate certain governance best practices, and in return those MPOs would be eligible for additional funding, be provided additional decision-making control over more funding, and be the direct recipients of the federal funds. We recommend \$1billion over four years.

BROADBAND INVESTMENT

AMPO supports a significant investment in building out the Country’s network of broadband infrastructure. A strong broadband network is essential to the work of MPOs. This has been particularly important during the COVID-19 pandemic. More broadband access increases opportunities for public involvement in planning and project development – a key component in transportation planning. Technology breakthroughs and improvements have an impact on how MPOs forecast transportation patterns and how investments will affect the movement of people and freight and real-time data is an essential tool. Strong communication networks support the collection and transmission of data to support planning. It can be used to level the playing field and improve racial equity for underserved communities by fostering investment in, and deployment of, emerging transportation technologies and strategic investments. Bringing broadband to underserved populations supports a laboratory for innovation and establishes a backbone for the application of emerging transportation technologies that support economic growth and quality jobs for those that need it most.

- Make investment in broadband infrastructure eligible under CAMQ and STBGP and any new Climate funding programs.
- Allow expenditure outside of the Metropolitan Planning Areas if a benefit for the MPA can be demonstrated and allow a higher federal share of these investments.
- MPO’s should be included in any broadband planning discussions or Congressional mandated task groups where broadband investment are being considered in the MPO planning area.

ELECTRIFICATION

AMPO supports the federal investment in building out the network of electric vehicle charging facilities. MPOs do not have authority over land use but need to be included in the decision-making process for the siting of facilities to understand and plan for the impacts to traffic patterns that may result from the construction of a facility,