



AMERICAN SOCIETY OF HIGHWAY ENGINEERS (ASHE) ANNOUNCES FEDERAL TRANSPORTATION PROGRAM POSITION

Preamble to ASHE Federal Transportation Program Position:

The 2015 – 2018 ASHE Strategic Plan has a goal to “Improve External Communications.” One of the strategies listed under that goal is to “Support and promote critical transportation policies and funding issues through legislative networks and by educating the general public on the value of these policies and issues.” While ASHE has responded in the past to specific legislative issues brought to the National Board’s attention by individual members or Sections, the response has always been reactive to the specific issue. The Legislative Committee and the National Board both feel that sustainable, long-term funding of the Federal Surface Transportation Program is the single most critical issue that our industry faces.

On December 4, 2015, President Barack Obama signed a new surface transportation bill. The Fixing America’s Surface Transportation Act (FAST Act) provides a total of \$305B over five years (including contract authority from the Highway Trust Fund and General Funds) for highway, transit and rail programs from FY’16 through FY’20. This only occurred after numerous short-term extensions, delays, and frequent threats of government shutdowns.

In an attempt to provide a basis for a more proactive approach to future reauthorizations, and provide a consistent “measuring stick” to evaluate the many proposals that will surface, on March 17, 2016, the ASHE National Board adopted the following Federal Transportation Program positions. It is hoped that by adopting these positions, ASHE will be able to contribute meaningful dialog and respond on behalf of our 6600 members in a timely and effective fashion.

ASHE Federal Transportation Program Position

1. There needs to be a federal presence in transportation to ensure safe, secure and efficient movement of people and goods throughout the country. The federal role should be focused on infrastructure vital to interstate commerce, safety, facilitating knowledge creation and transfer, and other actions designed to enhance the country’s ability to compete in a global economy.
2. All revenues generated from transportation user fees should be reserved exclusively for use on transportation initiatives. Should Congress deem the USDOT an efficient vehicle to promote other interests (not directly related to the movement of people and goods), then the funding for these programs should come from other, non-user fee sources.
3. Since the federal gas tax was last increased in 1993, inflation has eroded over 50% of the buying power of this static tax (18.4 cents per gallon for gasoline and 24.4 cents for diesel fuel). Revenue sources need to be indexed to maintain more buying power over time.



4. Non-petroleum based energy sources will, in the future, power a growing portion of the motor vehicle fleet. This shift from petroleum based fuel will further erode the current gasoline/diesel usage based revenue structure. Actions should be taken to broaden the revenue base for transportation funding to allow for a continuing, sustainable, and predictable Federal-aid program. Independent sources of revenue need to be found for transit and rail programs that do not unfairly burden highway users.

5. Congress needs to ensure dependable funding is appropriated for the transportation industry to support the full funding of the FAST ACT and provide long term funding beyond its 5-year duration. Adequate and stable sources of revenue need to be established for all modes of transportation that serve national purposes. Uncertainty and/or shortfalls in revenues cause disruption in the multi-year project development process and ultimately result in reduced project delivery, accelerated deterioration of the highway system, more congestion, increased vehicle crashes and a reduction in the number of jobs supported by the federal-aid highway program.

6. Federal environmental, air quality, and planning regulations should be streamlined and made concurrent/consistent to the maximum extent possible. The provision of safe, efficient mobility with minimum overall environmental impacts should be a goal for all federal agencies.

7. It is believed that the states and their local government partners, through the federally mandated cooperative planning processes, are in the best position to assign project priorities and make decisions on how to allocate scarce revenues to various project categories within each state. Federal programs should be focused in areas that are of true federal interest, and be structured in broad program areas where state and local governments have the maximum flexibility to match the available federal funds to the most pressing needs within their jurisdiction.

Approved: March 17, 2016