



AMERICAN COMMITMENT



An Open Letter to the United States Congress: Protect Taxpayers and Empower the States by Reforming Transportation Spending

July 8, 2014

Dear House Ways and Means Committee Chairman Dave Camp and Senate Finance Committee Chairman Ron Wyden:

With the Highway Trust Fund (HTF) on track to run out this summer, Congress is poised to consider a transportation spending measure. On behalf of our organizations and the millions of people we represent, we encourage you to seek ways to protect taxpayers and empower the states by reforming transportation spending. Please consider the following principles as you consider transportation legislation:

- **Oppose increases in federal fuel taxes or fees.** Transportation funding should be reformed on the spending side, not the revenue side. Until Congress takes steps to reduce wasteful spending, it is not fair to ask motorists, truckers, and bus operators for another dime on top of the billions they already pay every year. Similarly, non-germane policy changes like Postal Service savings and corporate tax holidays do nothing to correct the systemic problems with current transportation spending.
- **Move funding responsibility for non-road programs to the General Fund.** So long as there is a federal role in surface transportation, federal fuel tax revenue should be used to fund federal road and bridge priorities—namely, the interstate highway system—as it was originally intended to do. Congress should reject efforts to allocate these funds to parochial projects that do not benefit the motorists and truckers who pay them.
- **Return control of non-federal priorities to the states.** States, localities, and the private sector know their needs best and should have more control over addressing them. Congress should allow them the flexibility to fund and manage transportation projects within their borders, especially those that are truly local in nature. Current federal barriers to state-based funding and financing should be removed.



- **Reduce regulation that increases project costs and delays transportation projects.** Reducing or repealing bureaucratic and regulatory hurdles such as the Davis-Bacon requirement, lengthy and often duplicative environmental impact studies, and highway beautification initiatives would help reduce construction time and save millions of dollars that could go toward road and bridge improvement, helping to alleviate the congestion that plagues America's highways.
- **Consider transportation spending in standalone legislation.** Transportation legislation should not be tied into a larger spending package. Recent omnibus spending bills have been rife with waste and pet project procurements. Standalone transportation legislation will help keep spending levels in check and provide crucial transparency.
- **Consider transportation spending outside of a "lame-duck" session.** Legislation to extend surface transportation programs should be considered before the November election. Retiring and outgoing legislators should not be voting on significant legislation because they are less accountable to their constituents.

Congress must act responsibly in any surface transportation program extension measure. We urge you to keep these principles in mind, and we look forward to working with you and your colleagues.

Sincerely,

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