

COMPASS 2020 Federal Transportation Position Statements

REAUTHORIZATION OF FAST ACT

COMPASS encourages timely reauthorization of the FAST Act.

The Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act expires September 30, 2020. Consistent federal investment through a new long-term surface transportation reauthorization, developed in consultation with federal, state, and local partners, would allow local governments to address much-needed infrastructure improvements. Any new package must adequately reflect the role local governments play in the national transportation network.

FEDERAL TRANSPORTATION FUNDING

Provide more direct funding to local governments and increase local decision-making authority: The FAST Act made some progress toward more direct funding to local governments, while placing greater responsibility on those entities to develop and meet system performance goals. COMPASS encourages more direct allocation and flexibility to regions, MPOs, cities, and counties with transportation infrastructure responsibilities.

Maintain and increase set-aside for off-system bridges: Nearly eighty percent of the nation's bridges are the responsibility of local entities (not on the federal-aid highway system). This funding is needed for local entities to safely operate and maintain these bridge structures.

Streamline the federal permitting process (One Federal Decision): COMPASS supports the streamlining of the federal transportation project delivery process to facilitate timely construction of federally funded projects and reduce project delays and expense

Increase federal funding for public transportation: Public transportation providers in both urban and rural areas of Idaho operate on very limited funding. Congress should provide more robust growth in federal public transportation programs to help public transportation systems meet the needs of their communities.

Maintain federal support for non-motorized transportation options: Encouragement to participate in, and incentives to provide safe bicycle and pedestrian mobility options should remain a priority for Congress. Federally funded transportation projects should incorporate safe bicycle and pedestrian pathways

Support maintaining fiscal constraint requirement on long-range plans: Long range transportation plans are currently required to be limited to projects that can be completed with the level of funding reasonably expected to be available. This is a responsible approach to transportation planning, and limits the creation of unreasonable expectations that projects could be completed when funding is inadequate. COMPASS opposes eliminating the fiscal restraint requirements for long-range plans.

OTHER PROVISIONS

Congress must provide long-term solvency of the Highway Trust Fund.

COMPASS recognizes the Highway Trust Fund will become insolvent in 2021. Congress must solve this funding issue in a permanent, meaningful way, eliminating the need for short-term infusion of general fund dollars. Reauthorization proposals must address HTF funding to meet national transportation demands.

Support federal fuel excise tax increase: The federal fuel tax has not been increased since 1993 (26 years), and remains the most readily available “user-pay” solution to stabilizing the Highway Trust Fund.

Index federal fuel tax to rate of inflation: Indexing the motor fuels tax to rate of inflation will mitigate many of the political challenges associated with funding the Highway Trust Fund into the future.

Add additional Road User Charge concepts: Improvements in fuel efficiency and development of alternative fuel vehicles have a negative effect on the Highway Trust Fund. Additional user fee concepts such as a mileage-based user fees, are necessary to capture evolving trends and changes in relation to transportation infrastructure funding.

Rail Corridor Use: COMPASS urges Congress and the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) to ensure that the expectations set in the Rail Passenger Service Act of 1970 (RPSA) for reasonable cooperation between intercity passenger rail providers and railroad companies is upheld. Agreements for local use of rail owned by rail companies should not be subjected to unreasonable compensation requests and unjustifiable delay, and the FRA should utilize their authority to achieve the intent of law.

Resume Amtrak Passenger Rail Service: COMPASS encourages Congress to provide the necessary tools and funding to study the feasibility of resuming AMTRAK’s “Pioneer Route” passenger rail service to the Treasure Valley. The Pioneer Route provided varying service from Seattle to Denver, through Portland, Boise, and Salt Lake City for twenty years until it was discontinued in 1997. Given the recent economic and population growth of these areas of the Northwest, it is reasonable to study the feasibility of resuming the Pioneer Line passenger rail service.