



Photo Credit: Tom Thai

REAUTHORIZATION: INVEST IN OUR NATION'S METROPOLITAN REGIONS TO MOVE OUR ECONOMY

Introduction

Metropolitan areas account for approximately 90 percent of the United States' population, jobs, income, and output. The future of the nation's economy is linked to the ability of metropolitan areas to grow, develop, and deliver effective transportation systems at the regional level.

Since 1962, Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) have served as the means for local, regional, and state leaders, along with the public, to cooperatively identify and address their near and long-term transportation safety, mobility, and reliability needs for people and freight. MPOs have also allowed larger national interests, such as air quality and environmental justice, to be advanced in a manner consistent with the needs of individual communities.

AMPO supports the passage of a long-term bill that provides certainty and stability for planning and investing in the nation's transportation system with an expanded role and commensurate funding for MPOs.



A New National

MPOs BRING TOGETHER ALL STAKEHOLDERS TO MAXIMIZE TRANSPORTATION'S CONTRIBUTION TO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND QUALITY OF LIFE.

1. Funding: First Things First

The most significant issue facing the federal surface transportation program is the lack of an adequate and reliable source of revenue. The negative consequences of inaction increase and any progress achieved through performance-based planning, programming, and project delivery streamlining will be marginalized, unless the issue is addressed as part of this authorization.

Increase federal funding to ensure base system preservation. Fundamental elements of America's competitiveness are well-maintained roads, structurally-sound bridges, and buses and trains that run on time and are in good repair. AMPO recommends:

- Increasing federal funding immediately to support rebuilding of America's existing highways, bridges, transit systems, and other transportation infrastructure.
- Taking advantage of this rebuilding opportunity to:
 - 1) Broadly deploy cost-effective intelligent transportation system tools and strategies that improve mobility and safety on all modes.
 - 2) Utilize research on materials and construction techniques to build smarter, quicker, and lasting infrastructure.
- Providing federal support for the collection, formatting, and dissemination of robust metropolitan data to provide for effective transportation planning and performance management.

Maintain the Highway Trust Fund (HTF) at sufficient levels. Construction and maintenance of a safe transportation network for all types of travel is essential for continued economic prosperity. Congress last increased the gas tax in 1993, raising it from 14.1 cents to 18.4 cents per gallon. Significant improvements

in vehicle efficiency and inflation have lowered gas tax revenues, and reduced the purchasing power of the gas tax dollars. In inflation-adjusted terms, the gas tax is worth only 11.5 cents today.

- Restoring purchasing power to 1993 HTF levels and maintaining that level of investment relative to costs (i.e. providing a mechanism to address inflation without additional legislation).
- Continuing the user fee concept to support investments.
- Addressing the reduction in petroleum use and the need for additional revenue mechanisms for the transportation sector, in both the short and long-term.

Expand direct sub-allocation of federal funds to MPOs. Under MAP-21, MPOs have the responsibility for setting performance targets in their long range plans. Accordingly, MPOs need to have a more direct role in decision making related to the implementation of the projects and programs to make progress toward these targets. AMPO recommends:

- Establishing direct sub-allocations of the National Highway Performance Program and Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program funds (along with associated Obligation Authority) to MPOs.
- Increasing the amount of Surface Transportation Program funds (along with associated Obligation Authority) that are currently sub-allocated to MPOs.



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Vision



Restore pre-MAP-21 funding levels for programs vital to local governments. MAP-21 consolidated the myriad of federal surface transportation funding programs that existed prior to its enactment. The purpose was to create flexibility in the project selection process. This intent was only partially realized. Some of the programmatic changes of MAP-21 reduced the ability of local governments to fully participate in the overall federal-aid program. AMPO recommends:

- Reinstating dedicated funding for bridges, regardless of National Highway System status or Functional Classification.
- Returning funding for the Transportation Alternatives Program to the pre-MAP-21 levels for that which it replaced: Transportation Enhancements, Recreational Trails, and Safe Routes to Schools.
- Increasing funding for the Bus and Bus Facilities program to pre-MAP-21 levels and the continuation of a transparent, needs-driven discretionary program.

Create a multimodal freight program with the revenues necessary to improve intermodal networks at the metropolitan and statewide levels.

Additional funding is needed for the express purpose of developing a freight network that will operate seamlessly across all modes. A dedicated Freight Trust Fund, similar to the HTF, may be capitalized and maintained through user fees. Shippers and carriers across all modes have voiced willingness if the funds are solely used for the improvement of the transportation system. AMPO recommends:

- Establishing the Freight Trust Fund with eligibility provided for all modes and direct sub-allocations (along with associated Obligation Authority) to MPOs.

2. Planning: Reaching Agreement, Managing Performance

AMPO supports the introduction of performance-based planning and programming, and believes success may best be achieved through the phased iterative process supported by adequate resources, clear guidance, and cooperation amongst all affected stakeholders. This may be accomplished by emphasizing continuous improvement that recognizes the unique nature and challenges of individual metropolitan areas, rather than rigid standards that apportion or allocate funds based solely on metrics. Performance management requirements should be fully implemented and the impact on making progress towards stated targets fully assessed before linking to funding.

Provide resources for metropolitan planning commensurate with the required products and desired results. MPOs continue to enthusiastically support and accept an expanded role. Funds were not increased for metropolitan planning commensurate with the addition of new MPOs and new responsibilities; specifically, the level of effort required to implement the performance management requirements. Funding apportionments to the FHWA and FTA Metropolitan Planning Programs need to be increased to ensure that the expanded responsibilities placed on MPOs are effectively met.

Maintain the current population threshold for new MPOs. Policy, planning, and investment decisions are optimized when all stakeholders participate in a continuing, cooperative, and comprehensive manner. MPOs are the optimal forum to ensure that those with the most knowledge of economic and community development needs, local officials, are engaged with operators of major modes of transportation. AMPO recommends that new MPOs continue to be designated when an urbanized area's population exceeds 50,000, as determined by the Census Bureau.

3. Project Delivery: Condensing Time and Stretching Resources

Project delays and increased costs create lost opportunities in safety, mobility, access, economic development, environmental protection, and public support.

Continue to improve project streamlining and coordination. AMPO supports the progress made in project streamlining and coordination. As an organization, we encourage Congress to continue improving project delivery times, while eliminating the negative impacts. AMPO recommends:

- Increasing the threshold for Categorical Exclusion designation in Section 1317 of MAP-21, from \$30 million Total / \$5 million Federal to \$60 million Total / \$10 million Federal.
- Alternatively, of the amounts stated above, increasing the thresholds to a lesser degree. Include automatic inflation adjustments.
- Expanding the Categorical Exclusion designation to bicycle, pedestrian, and public transportation projects, as applicable, so these modes benefit from streamlining improvements.



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4. Freight: The Nation's Economy on the Move

The safe and efficient movement of freight throughout our nation is critical to the economy and national security. Delays at a port of entry, the lack of an intermodal connection, or a congested urban freeway, negatively impact our nation.

Expand the emphasis on freight in the planning and programming processes. In the near future, all modes are projected to see dramatic increases in the amount of goods moved. The growth will be driven by both domestic and international factors, for example, the expansion of the Panama Canal. Improvements must be made to existing transportation system deficiencies. AMPO recommends:

- Expanding the Primary Freight Network (PFN) to include all modes.
- Removing the cap on highway centerline miles of the PFN.
- Establishing Critical Urban Freight Corridors by MPOs in consultation with States.
- Addressing freight needs of border communities through improvements, allowing efficiency in handling customs and homeland security.



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