



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

Preamble to ASHE Federal Positions:

The 2012 – 2015 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 the upcoming 2014 (re)authorization of the Federal Surface Transportation Program is the single most critical issue that our industry will face over the next year. In an attempt to provide a basis for a more proactive approach to reauthorization, and provide a consistent “measuring stick” to evaluate the many proposals that will surface over the next nine months, the Board, on February 24, 2014 adopted the following Federal Program positions. It is hoped that by adopting these positions, ASHE will be able to join the upcoming reauthorization dialog and respond on behalf of it’s over 6000 members in a timely and effective fashion.

ASHE Federal Program Position

1. There needs to be a federal presence in transportation to ensure safe and efficient movement of people and goods throughout the country. The federal role should be focused on those facilities 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 for use for transportation purposes. 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, 18.4 cents per gallon for gasoline and 24.4 cents for diesel fuel, tax. 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 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. The revenue stream to the federal highway trust fund is not adequate to fund current spending levels. Congress needs to take immediate action to ensure dependable funding to the transportation industry. 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, increasing 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 made a goal for all federal agencies.

7. It is believed that the state's 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 states and local governments have the maximum flexibility to match the available federal funds to the most pressing needs within their jurisdiction.

Approved: February 24, 2014