



International Union of Operating Engineers

AFFILIATED WITH THE AMERICAN FEDERATION OF LABOR AND CONGRESS OF INDUSTRIAL ORGANIZATIONS

December 1, 2015

JAMES T. CALLAHAN
GENERAL PRESIDENT

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
317 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Harry Reid
Minority Leader
522 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

BRIAN E. HICKEY
GENERAL SECRETARY-TREASURER

The Honorable Paul D. Ryan
Speaker of the House
1233 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Minority Leader
233 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

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GENERAL COUNSEL

BRIAN POWERS

Dear Mr. McConnell, Mrs. Pelosi, Mr. Reid, and Mr. Ryan:

At this critical moment in the development of America's transportation infrastructure, the International Union of Operating Engineers respectfully requests that both chambers of Congress support the conference committee report on Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act, the long-term reauthorization of the nation's highway and transit program. The passage of this five-year bill will finally place the highway and transit program – the federal government's biggest and most important investment in the nation's infrastructure – on a sound long-term footing to create jobs, enhance safety, and compete effectively in the global economy. If enacted into law, the FAST Act will be a seminal accomplishment of the 114th Congress – an achievement that has not been seen in more than a decade.

The International Union of Operating Engineers (IUOE) represents nearly 400,000 workers in the United States and Canada, tens of thousands of whom are building North America's transportation network every day. The IUOE is one of this country's largest construction unions. We represent heavy equipment operators, mechanics, surveyors, and other occupations in the sector, and, needless to say, building transportation infrastructure is the bread and butter of the skilled, proud members of the Operating Engineers union.

The International Union of Operating Engineers applauds the bipartisan model developed by the key authorizing committees, Environment and Public Works Committee in the DRIVE Act (Developing a Reliable and Innovative Vision for the Economy Act) and the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee in the Surface Transportation Reform and Reauthorization Act (STRR), and sincerely appreciates the work of the committee leaders. Frankly, the nation needs more examples of this type of governance from Capitol Hill. Chairman Inhofe, Ranking Member Boxer, Chairman Shuster, and Ranking Member DeFazio all deserve a lot of credit for their stewardship of this legislation.

The construction industry took a beating during the Great Recession and it has yet to climb out of the employment hole it created – a hole that has led to major economic distress for many of the members of my union and their families. While the unemployment rate in the construction sector is relatively low now (6.2% in October), this data belies the real story in the industry.

Since the start of the Great Recession, the construction industry has lost nearly 15% of all its jobs. Over 1.1 million workers are no longer employed in this sector; their jobs vanished. The long-term certainty and robust funding levels contained within the FAST Act offers the potential to bring these workers' valuable skill sets back into the sector to rebuild our country's ailing transportation system. We need the long-term solution contained in the FAST Act, and we cannot afford to wait.

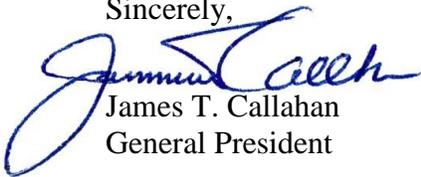
The FAST Act framework provides five-year certainty to transportation planners, the construction industry, and its supply chain. It builds on major successes in MAP-21, including improvements to the project delivery and environmental review process and important policy changes to the Transportation Innovation and Infrastructure Financing Act (TIFIA). The FAST Act creates a robust, new national emphasis on freight movement, targets resources at projects of national and regional significance and builds on the core highway program.

Furthermore, the Act will leverage private resources for transit projects while still ensuring the requisite protections for the public interest. In short, the FAST Act dramatically improves the nation's highway, transit, and rail systems, and it deserves the support of all members of the House of Representatives and Senate.

Enactment of the FAST Act represents a major opportunity for America, and for the thousands of members of the Operating Engineers who depend on these investments for their livelihoods. The transportation advocacy community believes wholeheartedly that now is the time to build on the bipartisan momentum from both sides of the aisle.

We appreciate your consideration and look forward to working with you to enact the FAST Act into law.

Sincerely,



James T. Callahan
General President