



WESTERN GOVERNORS' ASSOCIATION

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October 15, 2015

Honorable Bill Shuster
Chairman
House Committee on
Transportation and Infrastructure
2251 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Honorable Peter A. DeFazio
Ranking Member
House Committee on
Transportation and Infrastructure
2164 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Shuster and Ranking Member DeFazio:

The Western Governors' Association (WGA) represents the Governors of 19 western states along with those of Guam, American Samoa and the Northern Mariana Islands. The Association facilitates policy development, information exchange and collective action on issues of critical importance to the United States, its territories and particularly the West.

Western Governors are responsible for 2.4 million square miles of land, constituting more than two-thirds of the country's landmass. More than 112 million people live in the western states. Jobs, the economy and the quality of life depend on high quality transportation infrastructure to safely move goods and people. Transportation infrastructure in the West is strained by increased movement of goods and people as well as by underinvestment in new and existing infrastructure needed to keep pace with growth and change.

The federal-aid and transit programs continue to operate under short-term extensions while the balance in the Federal Highway Trust Fund approaches zero. Beyond creating uncertainty and delays, the stop-and-start nature of transportation funding raises the cost of infrastructure projects.

Western Governors urge Congress to pass a multi-year reauthorization of the federal Surface Transportation Program before the end of October. Western Governors believe Congress should incorporate the following concepts advocated by state transportation directors into the final bill:

- Fund highway and transit programs at least at current funding levels, plus inflation, and do so in a way that sustains contract authority;
- Continue the current project decision-making role of state and local governments to meet diverse needs;
- Expand flexibility to determine how and where to deploy investments to maximize the use of scarce resources; and

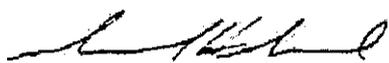
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- Reduce regulation accompanying the Federal Transportation Programs by further expediting project delivery with targeted bipartisan reforms to the environmental review and approval process.

Western Governors are also concerned about the looming deadline for implementation of Positive Train Control (PTC). Multiple reviews – including one completed by the Government Accountability Office – have determined the December 31, 2015 deadline for nationwide implementation is not realistic for both freight and passenger railroads. Railroads and the shippers who rely on railroads believe that without an extension rail transportation will suffer catastrophic consequences. Western Governors urge Congress to pass an extension of the PTC implementation deadline that includes clear performance metrics for the railroads post haste.

Finally, we reiterate our support for reauthorization and reform of the Surface Transportation Board. Western Governors passed WGA Policy Resolution 2015-05: *Transportation Infrastructure in the Western United States* in June of 2015 expressing support for reauthorization of the Surface Transportation Board and principles set forth in S. 808. We understand this bipartisan bill passed the Senate by unanimous consent and is now ready for consideration by the House. We ask the House to expedite consideration of S. 808 and work to pass this common sense legislation.

Respectfully,



Matthew H. Mead
Governor of Wyoming
Chairman, WGA



Steve Bullock
Governor of Montana
Vice Chair, WGA

Attachment

cc: Honorable John A. Boehner, Speaker U.S. House of Representatives
Honorable Kevin McCarthy, U.S. House Majority Leader
Honorable Nancy Pelosi, U.S. House Minority Leader
Honorable Paul Ryan, Chairman, U.S. House Committee on Ways and Means
Honorable Sander M. Levin, Ranking Member, U.S. House Committee on Ways and Means
Honorable Steny Hoyer, U.S. House Minority Whip
Members, U.S. House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee



Western Governors' Association Policy Resolution 2015-05

Transportation Infrastructure in the Western United States

A. BACKGROUND

1. The American West encompasses a huge land mass representing 2.4 million square miles or over two-thirds of the entire country. Over 112 million people live in these states and they reside in large, densely populated cities, smaller cities and towns and in rural areas.
2. Perhaps more than any other region, terrain and landownership patterns in the West underscore the purpose and vital need for a federal role in surface transportation. Western states are responsible for vast expanses of national highways and interstates that often do not correlate with population centers, but serve as critical national freight and transportation routes for the nation.
3. The transportation and transit needs in the west differ significantly from our eastern counterparts. Western states are building new capacity to keep up with growth, including new interstates, new transit systems and increased capacity on existing infrastructure.
4. Western states ports are national assets, moving needed parts and retail goods into the country, while also providing the gateway for our nation's exports. Although they benefit the entire country, the financial burden of developing, expanding and maintaining them to meet the demands of growing trade is almost entirely borne at the local level.
5. Jobs, the economy and quality of life in the West depend on high quality transportation infrastructure that efficiently, effectively and safely moves goods and people. Western transportation infrastructure is part of a national network that serves national interests. Among other things, transportation infrastructure in the west: moves agricultural and natural resource products from source to national and world markets; carries goods from western ports on western highways and railroad track to eastern and southern cities; and enables travelers to visit the great National Parks and other destinations in the west.
6. The infrastructure in the region is under strain from both increased movement of goods and people and from underinvestment in repair and new infrastructure needed to keep pace with this growth and change.

4. Western Governors believe in enhancing the ability to leverage scarce resources by supplementing traditional base funding by creating and enhancing financing mechanisms and tools that are appropriate for all areas of the United States, including those with low traffic densities where tolling and public private partnerships are not feasible.
5. Western Governors strongly encourage western states port operators and their labor unions to work together to avoid future work slowdowns by resolving labor issues well before contracts are set to expire. In recent years protracted disagreement in bargaining between parties has had an adverse impact on the American economy that should not be repeated. Ever larger cargo ships will require increased investment and labor training if western states ports are to remain competitive and not lose business to East Coast, Gulf Coast or Canadian ports.
6. Western Governors believe modern ports infrastructure is essential to strong national and western economy, and urge Congress to fully fund the Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund, and to reform the Harbor Maintenance Tax to ensure Western ports remain competitive. Furthermore, Western Governors believe the Federal government must work collaboratively with states, along with ports, local governments and key private sector transportation providers like the railroads, to ensure the necessary public and private investments to move imports and exports efficiently through the intermodal system.

C. GOVERNORS' MANAGEMENT DIRECTIVE

1. The Governors direct the WGA staff, where appropriate, to work with Congressional committees of jurisdiction and the Executive Branch to achieve the objectives of this resolution including funding, based on a prioritization of needs.
2. Furthermore, the Governors direct WGA staff to develop, as appropriate and timely, annual work plans to advance policy positions and goals contained in this resolution. Those work plans shall be presented to, and approved by, Western Governors prior to implementation. WGA staff shall keep Governors informed, on a regular basis, of their progress in implementing approved annual work plans.

Western Governors enact new policy resolutions and amend existing resolutions on a bi-annual basis. Please consult westgov.org/policies for the most current copy of a resolution and a list of all current WGA policy resolutions.