



Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington DC 20515

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March 10, 2017

SUMMARY OF SUBJECT MATTER

TO: Members, Subcommittee on Highways and Transit
FROM: Staff, Subcommittee on Highways and Transit
RE: Subcommittee Hearing on “FAST Act Implementation: State and Local Perspectives”

PURPOSE

The Subcommittee on Highways and Transit will meet on Wednesday, March 15, 2017, at 10:00 a.m. in 2167 Rayburn House Office Building to receive testimony from state and local authorities concerning the implementation of the *Fixing America’s Surface Transportation* (FAST) Act (P.L. 114-94). The Committee will hear from representatives of the American Association of State Highway Transportation Officials (AASHTO), the American Public Transportation Association (APTA), and the National League of Cities (NLC).

BACKGROUND

The FAST Act

The FAST Act was enacted on December 4, 2015, and is the first long-term surface transportation reauthorization bill in a decade. The FAST Act reauthorizes federal surface transportation programs through fiscal year (FY) 2020. The FAST Act improves our Nation’s infrastructure, reforms federal surface transportation programs, refocuses those programs on addressing national priorities, and encourages innovation to make the surface transportation system safer and more efficient. The FAST Act provides non-federal partners – state departments of transportation, public transportation agencies, and local entities, among others – with the needed certainty to make significant investments in the Nation’s surface transportation system.

Federal-aid Highway Program

Title I of the FAST Act reauthorizes the Federal-aid Highway and highway safety construction programs through FY 2020, establishes new programs to promote the efficient movement of freight and support large-scale projects of national or regional significance, and

makes other policy changes and reforms. A few of these programs, reforms, and policy changes are described below.

Refocuses on National Priorities

The FAST Act focuses on the importance of goods movement to the U.S. economy by establishing a new formula program for highway freight projects. It also emphasizes the need to address large-scale projects of national or regional importance by establishing a new competitive grant program, the Nationally Significant Freight and Highway Projects program, known as the FASTLANE grants program. Both programs provide limited eligibility for intermodal and freight rail projects. To address deficient bridges, the FAST Act continues the set-aside for off-system bridges, and expands funding available for on-system bridges located off the National Highway System.

Increases Flexibility

The FAST Act converts the Surface Transportation Program to a block grant program, maximizing the flexibility of the program for states and local governments. It also increases the amount of the program's funding that is distributed to local governments from 50 percent to 55 percent over the life of the bill.

Streamlines Reviews and Reduces Bureaucracy

The FAST Act streamlines the environmental review and permitting process to accelerate project approvals. It includes important reforms to align environmental reviews for historic properties. In addition, the FAST Act establishes a new pilot program to allow up to five states to substitute their own environmental laws and regulations for the *National Environmental Policy Act* (NEPA) if the state's laws and regulations are at least as stringent as NEPA. It also requires an assessment of previous efforts to accelerate the environmental review process, as well as recommendations on additional means of accelerating the project delivery process in a responsible manner.

Promotes Innovative Technologies

The FAST Act provides for the deployment of transportation technologies and congestion management tools that support an efficient and safe surface transportation system. It encourages the installation of vehicle-to-infrastructure equipment to reduce congestion and improve safety.

Focus on Highway Safety

The FAST Act increases the focus on roadway safety infrastructure and on the safety needs of pedestrians. In addition, there is an increase in funding to improve the safety of railway-highway grade crossings.

Public Transportation

The FAST Act reauthorizes the programs of the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) through FY 2020 and includes a number of reforms to improve mobility, streamline capital project construction and acquisition, and increase the safety of public transportation systems across the Nation. A few of these programs, reforms, and policy changes are described below.

Improves Safety

The FAST Act clarifies FTA's safety authority with respect to the oversight of, and responsibilities for, the safe operation of rail fixed guideway public transportation systems. It also requires the Secretary of Transportation (Secretary) to undertake a review of safety standards and protocols and evaluate the need to establish federal minimum public transportation safety standards. Finally, the FAST Act requires the Secretary to promote workforce safety through a rulemaking process.

Promotes Wise Investments

The FAST Act includes a number of reforms to the rolling stock procurement process in an effort to facilitate more cost-effective investments by public transportation agencies. It also addresses current purchasing power issues for smaller public transportation providers by supporting cooperative procurements and leasing.

Competitive Grant Programs

The FAST Act includes new competitive grant programs for buses and bus facilities, innovative transportation coordination, frontline workforce training, and public transportation research activities.

WITNESSES

Mr. John Schroer

Commissioner

Tennessee Department of Transportation

On behalf of AASHTO

Mr. Gary Thomas

President and Executive Director

Dallas Area Rapid Transit

On behalf of APTA

The Honorable Karen Freeman-Wilson

Mayor of Gary, Indiana

On behalf of NLC