



TO: Hon. Sam Graves, Chairman, House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee
Hon. Rick Larsen, Ranking Member, House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee
FROM: Andrew Stasiowski, President and CEO, American Highway Users Alliance
RE: Letter of Support for the BUILD America 250 Act

The American Highway Users Alliance is pleased to support the recently released surface transportation reauthorization bill expected to be marked up on Thursday May 21, in the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee. While we continue to review the legislation, we do so within the context of support.

The American Highway Users Alliance (the “Highway Users” or “we” or “our”) is the united voice of the motoring public, promoting safe, uncongested highways and enhanced mobility and related benefits for people and business. The Highway Users, a 300-member coalition, includes companies, trade associations, safety advocacy groups, and more. Our members represent or support millions of road users from the truck, bus, auto, RV, and motorcycling modes. Our membership includes companies (and associations of companies that, in turn, include many members) that not only use the roads, but comprise large portions of the economy. They manufacture and/or sell cars, trucks, automotive equipment, fuel, asphalt, concrete, safety equipment, signage, and other products that improve safety and efficiency on the road. Improvements in safety and efficiency that result from highway infrastructure investment improve supply chains, the economy, and the quality of life of all Americans.

Key Points

In supporting the legislation, we note that the bill --

- **Increases highway and bridge investment at a time of fiscal constraint and reduction for many Federal programs.** This bill makes that important step, increasing highway investments from the Highway Trust Fund, even as we hope that funding levels for highways and bridges can be further increased. Highway investment provides strong safety, economic, and mobility benefits to the country, and deserves particularly strong support. Further, highway needs are vast. USDOT’s most recent Conditions and Performance report found a backlog in highway and bridge investment of over \$850 billion, far, far greater than backlogs in other surface modes. And those estimates don’t fully capture major inflation in highway construction in recent years.
- **Streamlines and reduces regulatory and administrative requirements.** The bill makes positive steps in this important effort. As to permitting reform and expedited environmental review for large projects, key reforms to pursue include: hard deadlines rather than mere deadline goals; reducing the number of alternatives to be considered; and further efforts on One Federal Decision. Moreover, we support efforts to increase the state role in the NEPA process, and expanding Categorical Exclusions.
- **Increases emphasis on safety investment and on traditional road and bridge projects.** We support a particular focus on the NHS and other arterial roads, which are important to freight as well as personal mobility. Within the highway program we support increased funding focus on safety infrastructure investments (HSIP), the NHS and other arterial roads, and freight program highway investments.
- **Emphasizes formula funding to States, expediting highway investment and focusing it on projects of national or regional importance.** The record under IJA is that highway funds are obligated more promptly through formula programs than through discretionary programs and

also that formula funds spend more slowly when suballocated. Further, local projects, whether funded through suballocations of formula dollars or discretionary programs, are less likely to address national priorities. Thus, we support the bill's distributing an increased portion of highway and bridge funds to States through formula.

Additional Points

Highway Trust Fund reform. The solvency of the Highway Trust Fund is a major priority of the Highway Users. With a nearly \$300 billion dollar shortfall over the next 10 years, and the Highway Trust Fund facing insolvency in 2028, the status quo cannot stand. We believe that it is imperative that Congress fully reforms the Highway Trust Fund, eliminating the need to rely on general fund revenue, and protecting the long-term stability of trust funded Surface Transportation programs. We support eliminating all of the current taxes on fuel and trucks and replacing them with an annual weight-based fee collected by the states at point on registration. This ensures all vehicles pay into the system, regardless of powertrain, lowers the price of gasoline, and eliminates a growing federal deficit in the trust fund.

Fees on Electric Vehicles and Plug-in Hybrid Electric Vehicles will not solve the shortfall in the trust fund, nor will it avoid insolvency in 2028. We need a comprehensive reform of the Highway Trust Fund. Congress has the opportunity to fix the trust fund before it becomes insolvent in 2028, and we believe an annual weight-based fee is the only solution that can accomplish this goal. We look forward to continuing to work with both the House and Senate to fully reform and stabilize the Highway Trust Fund.

We support the following further improvements, in the bill:

- We appreciate the increased emphasis given to investments in truck parking.
- We support efforts to reduce freight bottlenecks and support efforts to reduce congestion through increased investment in highways.
- While giving increased emphasis to formula funding, highway dollars that the bill reserves for discretionary programs should give increased emphasis to significant highway and bridge projects, not local projects or investments in other modes.
 - The Highway Users are opposed to efforts to use highway dollars to support Amtrak.

Safety

We support increased HSIP infrastructure investment and these safety improvements,

- Establish federal work zone safety standards for both worker safety and the enforcement of traffic violations in work zones.
- Encourage use of proven yet innovative technologies related to work zone safety.
- Continue federal safety contingency funding as an innovative highway project delivery method.
- Require USDOT to maintain and promote guidelines for states to come into compliance with the Manual for Assessing Safety Hardware (MASH) standards with respect to guardrail and other roadway safety devices

Conclusion

In conclusion, we are pleased to support the committee-developed bill and look forward to working with the committee to achieve enactment, this year, hopefully with improvements outlined above.