



Chairman Shuster's Vision Statement: Infrastructure Discussion Draft

Introduction:

This discussion draft is intended to further the national conversation about the current state of America's infrastructure and highlight some of the major roadblocks to funding and improving our transportation network. The American people continue to wait for action on infrastructure by their federal elected leaders, and this proposal outlines one potential legislative path forward.

This discussion draft reflects input from Members of Congress from both sides of the aisle, as well as the broad stakeholder community.

However, it does not attempt to solve every issue facing our infrastructure, nor does it pretend to provide all of the answers. Instead, it serves as a framework and a new starting point for Congress to begin to seriously address, in a fiscally responsible and bipartisan manner, how we are going to provide the Nation with the 21st century infrastructure it needs and deserves.

We all know that infrastructure is the backbone of our economy, our national defense, and our identity. If we can't move people and goods efficiently throughout the country and into the broader world, then our economy suffers. Every good and service relies one way or another on our infrastructure system. We need modern, efficient infrastructure to remain globally competitive in an ever-shrinking world.

Our constituents know how awful their roads and bridges have become. The current population is 328 million people, and we're rapidly heading to 400 million. Commuting to work, going to the doctor's office, and getting the kids to activities are taking Americans longer due to worsening road conditions and congestion. They expect Congress to act to improve our infrastructure.

Yet, when Washington does attempt to address the issue, the bureaucratic red tape causes significant, costly delays. Complicated projects can take years and years to get through the overly burdensome permitting process.

The Highway Trust Fund (HTF) is in serious trouble. The Congressional Budget Office estimates that it will go insolvent, yet again, as soon as the fall of 2020 and will see a cumulative shortfall of more than \$160 billion by the fall of 2028.



My proposal will address these issues in the following ways.

Reforming the Highway Trust Fund (HTF):

This proposal reforms and addresses the short-term and long-term solvency of the HTF, and ultimately eliminates the federal gas and diesel taxes. By ensuring its short-term solvency, we can thoughtfully look at the future needs of the HTF and produce a solution that fully supports appropriate investment in our Nation's vital transportation infrastructure.

The proposal creates a Highway Trust Fund Commission of experts to study how best to achieve the long-term solvency of the HTF and recommend to Congress a 21st century solution. The results of the Commission will take the form of a legislative recommendation that will be presented to Congress for a simple up-or-down vote. However, the Commission cannot propose to continue or adjust the gas and diesel taxes. An innovative solution must be proposed.

The proposal also establishes a national, voluntary pilot program to test the viability of replacing current HTF user fees with a per-mile user fee. This pilot program will help address a variety of policy issues associated with a per-mile user fee and provide Congress with important information.

This proposal also recognizes that a number of surface transportation system users do not currently pay into the system, even though they benefit from it. The proposal lays out a simple principle: if you are using the system in some manner, then you should help pay for it. Capturing all users of the system is a fair requirement which will benefit everyone.

This represents one responsible solution for ensuring the solvency of the HTF.

Strengthening Investment:

This proposal increases federal investment in our Nation's infrastructure. It provides for direct federal investment in a broad array of transportation projects, including projects that use new innovations and technologies to transform the way we move goods and people. It provides states with an additional year of certainty to plan and carry out critical highway and public transportation projects by extending the FAST Act through fiscal year 2021. It also reauthorizes and improves a number of successful water infrastructure and economic development programs. Finally, it ensures that user fees paid into the Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund are fully spent to improve access to our ports.



Utilizing Innovative Financing:

A number of provisions designed to remove barriers to private investment and encourage the private sector to participate in the effort to rebuild our Nation's infrastructure are included in this proposal. It authorizes incentive grants to encourage public entities to lease their infrastructure to the private sector and then use both the funding from the lease and incentive grant to improve other public infrastructure. It also helps the federal government tackle its crumbling real property inventory by leveraging private sector dollars and expertise in the construction and rehabilitation of federal buildings, including military family housing for Coast Guard service members.

Accelerating Project Delivery:

Furthermore, this proposal continues to reform the environmental review and permitting process to accelerate delivery of critical transportation projects, while protecting the environment. It ensures that the Department of Transportation can carry out the reforms and two-year permitting deadlines called for under the Administration's One Federal Decision Executive Order. It also authorizes the use of innovate practices and makes other administrative reforms at the Department to expedite the environmental review and permitting process for transportation projects. Finally, it reduces unreasonable delays in the water quality certification process under section 401 of the Clean Water Act.

This discussion draft includes other provisions as well. I hope this document prompts a more serious discussion about how, together, we can work to responsibly address our Nation's infrastructure needs.