

REPORT TO SHASTA COUNTY RTPA

SUBJECT	MEETING DATE	ITEM NUMBER
California Consensus on Federal Transportation Authorization 2008	06-24-08	4-4

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Board:

1. Approve the Final Draft of the California Consensus on Federal Transportation Authorization 2008 (attached); and
2. Authorize the Executive Director to sign any necessary documents and agree to be listed as a member of the consensus.

SUMMARY

Caltrans headquarters and the Governor's office are seeking widespread support for a set of principles to be used to shape the next federal transportation funding authorization.

DISCUSSION

The current federal transportation authorization act, also known as the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, and Efficient Transportation Equity Act – A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA – LU), will expire after September 30, 2009. The national debate on the form, content, and funding provisions of the next authorization has already begun. California will best be able to influence the debate at all levels if it can present a unified opinion on principles for the next authorization.

The attached document represents the consensus of a broad group of California's transportation stakeholders on statewide principles for the next federal transportation act. This document was developed through a series of open meetings and workshops that began in December 2007. The California Department of Transportation and Business, Transportation and Housing Agency led the effort with extensive input from the State's metropolitan planning organizations, regional transportation planning agencies, other transportation agencies, the private sector, and multiple public interest groups.

In general, the group reached consensus on the following seven principles:

- Ensure the financial integrity of the Highway and Transit Trust Funds.
- Rebuild and maintain transportation infrastructure in a good state of repair.
- Establish goods movement, as a national economic priority.
- Enhance mobility through congestion relief within and between metropolitan areas.

- Strengthen the federal commitment to safety and security, particularly with respect to rural roads and access.
- Strengthen comprehensive environmental stewardship.
- Streamline Project Delivery.

In the next several months, the adopting stakeholders will use this document to raise awareness of California's intentions for the next authorization with the State's Congressional delegation, other statewide and national organizations, and candidates for national office working on authorization policy and positions. The group is timing the release of this document to influence committee staff before they begin drafting proposals, which is expected to begin in the middle of November 2008.

ALTERNATIVES

The Board may choose not to approve the principles and join the consensus. This is not recommended because the principles will benefit all regions and will have more influence if there is a broad consensus of support.

OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT

The principles have been reviewed by the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), which concurs with the document.

FINANCING

Approval of the principles will have no direct impact on funding. It is hoped that the principles will improve future funding for transportation projects.



Daniel S. Little, AICP, Executive Director

DSL/JDS/jac

Attachment: Final Draft of the California Consensus on Federal Transportation Authorization 2008

California Consensus on Federal Transportation Authorization 2008

Under the leadership of Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger, the California Business, Transportation and Housing Agency, and the California Department of Transportation, stakeholders from across California have united on a basic set of principles that we ask our delegation in Washington, DC to adopt in the upcoming debate on the future of this nation's transportation policies.

1. Ensure the financial integrity of the Highway and Transit Trust Funds

The financial integrity of the transportation trust fund is at a crossroads. Current user fees are not keeping pace with needs or even the authorized levels in current law. In the long-term, the per-gallon fees now charged on current fuels will not provide the revenue or stability needed, especially as new fuels enter the marketplace. This authorization will need to stabilize the existing revenue system and prepare the way for the transition to new methods of funding our nation's transportation infrastructure.

- Maintain the basic principle of a user-based, pay-as-you-go system.
- Continue the budgetary protections for the Highway Trust Fund and General Fund supplementation of the Mass Transportation Account.
- Assure a federal funding commitment that supports a program size based on an objective analysis of national needs, which will likely require additional revenue.
- To diversify and augment trust fund resources, authorize states to implement innovative funding mechanisms such as tolling, variable pricing, carbon offset banks, freight user fees, and alternatives to the per-gallon gasoline tax that are accepted by the public, and fully dedicated to transportation.
- Minimize the number and the dollar amount of earmarks, reserving them only for those projects in approved transportation plans and programs.

2. Rebuild and maintain transportation infrastructure in a good state of repair.

Conditions on California's surface transportation systems are deteriorating while demand is increasing. This is adversely affecting the operational efficiency of our key transportation assets, hindering mobility, commerce, quality of life and the environment.

- Give top priority to preservation and maintenance of the existing system of roads, highways, bridges and transit.
- Continue the historic needs-based nature of the federal transit capital replacement programs.

3. Establish goods movement, as a national economic priority.

Interstate commerce is the historic cornerstone defining the federal role in transportation. The efficient movement of goods, across state and international boundaries increases the nation's ability to remain globally competitive and generate jobs.

- Create a new federal program and funding sources dedicated to relieving growing congestion at America's global gateways that are now acting as trade barriers and creating environmental hot spots.
- Ensure state and local flexibility in project selection.
- Recognize that some states have made a substantial investment of their own funds in nationally significant goods movement projects and support their investments by granting them priority for federal funding to bridge the gap between need and local resources.
- Include adequate funding to mitigate the environmental and community impacts associated with goods movement.

4. Enhance mobility through congestion relief within and between metropolitan areas.

California is home to six of the 25 most congested metropolitan areas in the nation. These mega-regions represent a large majority of the population affected by travel delay and exposure to air pollutants.

FINAL DRAFT

- Increase funding for enhanced capacity for all modes aimed at reducing congestion and promoting mobility in the most congested areas.
- Provide increased state flexibility to implement performance-based infrastructure projects and public-private partnerships, including interstate tolling and innovative finance programs.
- Consolidate federal programs by combining existing programs using needs, performance-based, and air quality criteria.
- Expand project eligibility within programs and increase flexibility among programs.

5. *Strengthen the federal commitment to safety and security, particularly with respect to rural roads and access.*

California recognizes that traffic safety involves saving lives, reducing injuries and optimizing the uninterrupted flow of traffic on the state's roadways. California has completed a comprehensive Strategic Highway Safety Plan.

- Increase funding for safety projects aimed at reducing fatalities, especially on the secondary highway system where fatality rates are the highest.
- Support behavioral safety programs – speed, occupant restraint, driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs, road-sharing, etc. -- through enforcement and education.
- Address licensing, driver improvement, and adjudication issues and their impact on traffic safety.
- Assess and integrate emerging traffic safety technologies, including improved data collection systems.
- Fund a national program to provide security on our nation's transportation systems, including public transit.

6. *Strengthen comprehensive environmental stewardship.*

Environmental mitigation is part of every transportation project and program. The federal role is to provide the tools that will help mitigate future impacts and to cope with changes to our environment.

- Integrate consideration of climate change and joint land use-transportation linkages into the planning process.
- Provide funding for planning and implementation of measures that have the potential to reduce emissions and improve health such as new vehicle technologies, alternative fuels, clean transit vehicles, transit-oriented development and increased transit usage, ride-sharing, and bicycle and pedestrian travel.
- Provide funding to mitigate the air, water and other environmental impacts of transportation projects.

7. *Streamline Project Delivery*

Extended processing time for environmental clearances, federal permits and reviews, etc. add to the cost of projects. Given constrained resources, it is all the more critical that these clearances and reviews be kept to the minimum possible consistent with good stewardship of natural resources.

- Increase opportunities for state stewardship through delegation programs for NEPA, air quality conformity, transit projects, etc.
- Increase state flexibility for using at-risk design and design-build.
- Ensure that federal project oversight is commensurate to the amount of federal funding.
- Require federal permitting agencies to engage actively and collaboratively in project development and approval.
- Integrate planning, project development, review, permitting, and environmental processes to reduce delay.