

2022 COMPASS Federal Transportation Position Statements

REAUTHORIZATION OF FAST ACT

COMPASS encourages long-term reauthorization of the FAST Act.

The Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act expires September 30, 2021. Consistent, predictable federal investment through a new long-term surface transportation reauthorization would allow local governments to address much-needed infrastructure improvements.

Provide more direct funding to local governments and increase local decision-making authority: COMPASS encourages more direct allocation and flexibility to regions, MPOs, cities, and counties with transportation infrastructure responsibilities. The FAST Act made some progress in this regard, while placing greater responsibility on those entities to develop and meet system performance goals.

Streamline the federal permitting process (One Federal Decision): COMPASS supports streamlining of the federal transportation project delivery process to facilitate timely construction of federally funded projects and reduce project delay and expense.

Increase federal funding for public transportation: Public transportation providers in both urban and rural areas of Idaho operate on very limited funding. Congress should provide more robust growth in federal public transportation programs to help these systems meet the needs of their communities.

Maintain federal support for non-motorized transportation options: Encouragement to participate in, and incentives to provide safe bicycle and pedestrian mobility options should remain a priority for Congress.

Maintain and increase set-aside for off-system bridges: Nearly eighty percent of the nation's bridges are the responsibility of local entities (not on the federal-aid highway system). This funding is crucial for local entities to safely operate and maintain these bridge structures.

Maintain fiscal constraint requirement on long-range plans: COMPASS opposes eliminating the fiscal constraint requirements for long-range transportation plans. Long range transportation plans are required to be limited to projects that can be completed with the level of funding reasonably expected to be available. This is a responsible approach to transportation planning and mitigates unreasonable expectations that projects could be completed when necessary funding is unavailable.

FEDERAL TRANSPORTATION FUNDING – HIGHWAY TRUST FUND

Congress must solve the perennial Highway Trust Fund funding problem in a permanent, meaningful way, eliminating the need for short-term infusions of general fund dollars.

- **Support federal fuel excise tax increase:** The federal fuel tax has not been increased since 1993 (28 years) and remains the most readily available user-pay solution to stabilizing the Highway Trust Fund.
- **Index federal fuel tax to rate of inflation:** Indexing the motor fuels tax to rate of inflation will mitigate many of the political barriers to funding the Highway Trust Fund into the future.
- **Add additional Road User Charge concepts:** Improvements in fuel efficiency and development of alternative fuel vehicles have a negative effect on the Highway Trust Fund. Additional user fee concepts such as mileage-based user fees are necessary to capture evolving trends and changes in relation to transportation infrastructure funding.

RAIL PROVISIONS

Inter-City Passenger Rail Service: COMPASS encourages Congress to provide the necessary tools and funding to study the feasibility to resuming AMTRAK’s “Pioneer Route” passenger rail service to the Treasure Valley. The Pioneer Route provided service from Seattle to Denver, through Portland, Boise, and Salt Lake City for twenty years until it was discontinued in 1997. Given the recent economic and population growth of the areas of the Northwest, it is reasonable to study the feasibility of resuming the Pioneer Line passenger rail service.

Rail Corridor Use: COMPASS urges Congress and the Federal Railroad Administration to ensure expectations set in the Rail Passenger Service Act of 1970 for reasonable cooperation between intercity passenger rail providers and railroad companies is upheld. Agreements for local use of rail owned by rail companies should not be subjected to unreasonable compensation requests and unjustifiable delay. The FRA should utilize their authority to achieve the intent of law.