

ITEM 9 - Action

May 21, 2014

Briefing on the Status of the Highway Trust Fund and Reauthorization of the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP-21), and Approval of a Letter to the Washington Region's Congressional Delegation in Support of Replenishing the Highway Trust Fund and Reauthorizing MAP-21

Staff

Recommendation:

- Receive briefing on current Congressional activities to address funding for transportation and to reauthorize MAP-21.
- Approve the enclosed letter to the Washington Region's Congressional Delegation in support of replenishing the Highway Trust Fund and reauthorizing MAP-21.

Issues:

None

Background:

According to the US Department of Transportation, the Highway Trust Fund will run out of money in July, and the authorization of MAP-21, which provides federal funding for all surface transportation programs, expires on September 30. The TPB is a member of the Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations (AMPO).



NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION

TRANSPORTATION PLANNING BOARD

May 21, 2014

Senator (or Congressman) [FIRST] [LAST]
United States Senate (or House of Representatives)
XX-XXX Senate (or House) Office Building
Washington DC 20XXX

RE: Protect the Highway Trust Fund from Insolvency—Now and Into the Future

Dear Senator (or Congressman) [LAST],

A day we have long feared is finally upon us: the federal Highway Trust Fund will be insolvent as soon as July of this year. And MAP-21, the authorizing legislation for transportation infrastructure investment in our country, is set to expire at the end of September.

As the federally designated metropolitan planning organization for the National Capital Region, a growing region of more than 5 million people, we urgently request your help—and soon.

Insolvency will result in significant administrative burdens and immediate unmet transportation needs. Agencies responsible for keeping our roadways and transit systems safe and in a state of good repair have programmed nearly \$2 billion in federal funding to spend on hundreds of improvements this year. Many of the projects address critical safety needs. Insolvency will put agencies in the impossible position of deciding which projects to keep funding and which to halt.

Disruptions in the flow of federal dollars will also threaten job growth and economic recovery in our region. And they will make it harder to maintain mobility for the federal workforce and for the millions of people who visit our nation's capital each year.

Imminent insolvency is not our only worry, however.

The Highway Trust Fund needs a more sustainable source of revenue for the long-term. Agencies need greater predictability in order to plan the major, long-term transportation investments we know we need. One-time cash infusions and other short-term funding fixes are not sufficient to meet these challenges.

In 2013, both states in our region—Maryland and Virginia—took historic steps to raise new revenue for transportation at the state level, by raising user fees and other taxes to continue investing in critical infrastructure. The District of Columbia took similar steps five years ago.

Now it's time for the federal government to do its part. Federal per-gallon excise taxes on motor fuels, traditionally the main source of revenue for the Highway Trust Fund, have not been increased in over 20 years, during which time inflation has eroded nearly 40 percent of their purchasing power. The result: more and more transfers of general fund revenues and other one-time fixes have been used to fill the widening gap between traditional revenue sources and our growing transportation needs.

We urge you to take decisive action now to replenish the Highway Trust Fund, and to secure more sustainable funding for transportation into the future when you reauthorize MAP-21 later this year. Raising user-based revenue options are a sensible approach. Others may provide equally reliable and sustainable revenue flows. We urge your consideration of any such alternative.

Should you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact Gerald Miller, acting co-director of transportation planning at the Transportation Planning Board. He can be reached by phone at 202.962.3319, or by e-mail at gkmiller@mwkog.org.

We hope we can count on your help in this exceptionally urgent matter.

Sincerely,

Patrick Wojahn
Chair, National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board

DRAFT