

Legislative Update – Federal Transportation Reauthorization Process, Key Issues and MPO Priorities



MIC Policy Board
April 17, 2019



Ron Chicka, AICP
MIC Director

Infrastructure Legislation in the 116th Congress

- **Infrastructure legislation could be the only bipartisan legislation Congress and the White House could agree on**
- **FAST Act expires September 2020**
 - ✓ Highway Trust Fund has enough revenue to meet obligations till spring/summer 2021.
- **Paying for the legislation is a primary issue that remains unresolved**

White House Plan

- **Focuses on leveraging federal dollars to attract private investment**
 - ✓ Fell flat in the last Congress.
 - ✓ The White House has not offered a new plan, nor a funding solution.

Congress

- **Passed FY19 Appropriations**
 - ✓ Met FAST Act authorized levels.

President's 2020 Budget Request to Congress

- **Cuts overall transportation spending**
 - ✓ Maintains FAST Act authorized levels.
 - ✓ Congress will set their own budget and appropriations

**US Senate —
Budget Committee**

**US Senate —
Environment and
Public Works
Committee**

- **Approved a budget that would increase transportation spending...**
 - ✓ IF revenue is provided to pay for any increase.
- **Drafting a FAST Act reauthorization**
 - ✓ Funding levels unknown.
 - ✓ Finance Committee has not provided a revenue number.
 - ✓ Transportation interests (transit, trucking, rail) have not yet engaged on reauthorization
 - ✓ AMPO weighed in with its policy requests

**US House of
Representatives —
Budget Committee**

**US House of
Representatives —
T&I Committee**

- **Has not completed its budget**
- Holding hearings with transportation interests/constituents
- **House seems to be more intent on moving a broad “omnibus” infrastructure bill (transportation, broadband, energy, water, etc.) vs. standalone FAST Act reauthorization**
 - ✓ Bills could be combined.

House and Senate Appropriations Committees

(Annual Spending Bills)

- **Both committees are conducting hearings**
 - ✓ Both the House and Senate are intent on passing all bills before the end of the year.
 - ✓ Democrats in the House will likely increase non-defense spending.
 - ✓ House and Senate will need to adjust spending caps on both defense and non-defense spending, or sequestration will automatically cut both.



Outlook

- Congress will need to act on FAST Act/Infrastructure bill before the August Congressional recess or the momentum will fade as the 2020 elections take over.
- In a divided government both sides will need compromise to pass any significant infrastructure bill.
- Continued investigations into the President will likely deter bipartisanship.



Association of
Metropolitan
Planning
Organizations

MPO Priorities for Transportation Reauthorization

- **Fix the Highway Trust Fund**
 - ✓ Identify a long-term, sustainable revenue source to provide certainty that funding will be available in the future to meet the federal share of projects.
- **Increase federal investment in transportation**
 - ✓ The transportation system is aging and needs significant maintenance and rehabilitation.
 - ✓ Numerous large-scale projects necessitate an increase in the amount of federal investment commensurate with increased state and local funding.



Association of
Metropolitan
Planning
Organizations

MPO Priorities for Transportation Reauthorization

- **Increase planning funds for MPOs**
 - ✓ New federal performance based planning and programming requirements, enacted as part of MAP-21, require additional data collection, modeling, studies and personnel.
 - ✓ With the 2020 Census, more MPOs will be created; without new revenue for metropolitan planning, each MPO receives less funding to perform planning functions.



Association of
Metropolitan
Planning
Organizations

MPO Priorities for Transportation Reauthorization

- **Increase the population threshold for the designation of new MPOs to 100,000**
 - ✓ Provide an option for existing MPOs between 50,000 and 99,999 to either be grandfathered in or be removed from the regional planning process.



Association of
Metropolitan
Planning
Organizations

MPO Priorities

for Transportation Reauthorization

- **Improve project selection authority of MPO boards.**
 - ✓ Give all MPOs decision making authority on which transportation projects should be funded in their planning areas.
 - ✓ Allow MPOs under 200,000 in population to select their federally funded projects unless they choose to continue with current law letting the state cooperatively select highway projects.



Association of
Metropolitan
Planning
Organizations

MPO Priorities

for Transportation Reauthorization

- **Support continued development of multi-modal national freight network with dedicated funding.**
 - ✓ MPOs better understand the transportation facilities and unique needs of their region and should be more involved in developing freight plans in conjunction with state DOTs.



Association of
Metropolitan
Planning
Organizations

MPO Priorities

for Transportation Reauthorization

- **Establish a Pilot Program for High-Performing MPOs**
 - ✓ Demonstrate defined best practices
 - ✓ In return would be eligible for additional funding, be provided additional decision-making control over more funding, and be the direct recipients of the federal funds.



Association of
Metropolitan
Planning
Organizations

MPO Priorities

for Transportation Reauthorization

- **Expand eligibility for the Safe Routes to School Program**
 - ✓ The current SRTS program only benefits children up to eighth grade.
 - ✓ Expand program eligibility through twelfth grade so that it may enable and encourage high school students to walk and bike to school.
- **Encourage the use of MPO websites and social media platforms for the publication of plans and TIPs**
 - ✓ Print news should remain an optional method of publication and not a requirement.

Comments? Questions?



Ron Chicka, MIC Director

rchicka@ardc.org

www.dsmic.org