

Talking Points

A Jobs Opportunity – the Next Surface Transportation Bill

To remain competitive in the global economy and ensure that working people and employers have access to transportation that works, America must invest in its transportation system. A major opportunity to do that will be in the fall of 2009 with a bill to replenish the Highway Trust Fund.

The current transportation investment law – called SAFETEA-LU, or the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users – expires September 30.

- The Highway Trust Fund is currently replenished through the gas tax. Because of the spike in gas prices and an overall decrease in driving, there will be a major shortfall in the fund.
- Congress has begun considering how to increase Trust Fund resources. As our country shifts to cleaner fuels and greater use of mass transit, the gas tax will not provide enough revenues to improve and build the roads and bridges our country needs.

The last bill invested \$286 billion – far short of needs. The upcoming bill must authorize at least \$500 billion to simply meet existing needs.

- Finding alternative sources of investment and ways to create dedicated revenue for the Highway Trust Fund will be a top priority for LIUNA in the next Congress.
- Building and maintaining a world-class transportation system is inherently a federal responsibility. We must maximize all existing revenue – including capital expenditures, Treasury appropriations, and if possible in the future, an increase in the gas tax as a stopgap measure.
- We are not against innovative financing, particularly for large projects of national significance. And while PPPs, or public-private partnerships, may have a place, they cannot stand for “picking the people’s pockets” or a sell-off of national assets.

We must restore and grow the Highway Trust Fund so America remains a competitive nation.

- While developing nations are striving for first-class transportation systems, we’re falling behind. India and China, for example, invest 8 to 9 percent of their gross domestic product in basics like transportation – compared to 2 percent in the U.S.
- Both employers and working people depend on transportation every day – it must be accessible and reliable.
- As we build America’s transportation system for the future, we must make sure the jobs we create and support are good jobs. That means that regardless of the source of investment, comprehensive provisions of the family-supporting Davis-Bacon Act must apply.