
October 11, 2019

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
United States Senate
S-230 The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Minority Leader
United States Senate
S-221 The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
House of Representatives
H-232 The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
House of Representatives
H-204 The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Majority Leader McConnell, Minority Leader Schumer, Speaker Pelosi, and Minority Leader McCarthy:

Western Governors urge Congress to reach bipartisan agreement on a long-term surface transportation reauthorization bill that addresses the unique needs of our region and provides the certainty required to obtain the best possible returns from investments in transportation infrastructure. Efficient, effective and safe transportation networks are essential to our region and the nation, and the maintenance and improvement of our surface transportation infrastructure are critical state and national priorities.

Accordingly, Western Governors encourage the expedited consideration of [S. 2302](#), America's Transportation Infrastructure Act, which was approved by the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee on a unanimous vote of 21 to 0 on July 30, 2019. As the bill works its way through the legislative process, Western Governors also support your efforts to enact provisions ensuring long-term solvency of the Highway Trust Fund (HTF).

Surface Transportation Funding

A viable, long-term funding mechanism is critical to the maintenance and expansion of our nation's surface transportation network. Long-term authorization is necessary to provide certainty for state, local and tribal governments, as well as for project proponents and partners attempting to secure financing for transportation improvements.

Western Governors' Association (WGA) Policy Resolution [2018-06](#), *Transportation Infrastructure in the Western United States*, asserts that Congress must ensure long-term HTF solvency and provide for sustainable federal transportation investment through the fund. Many western states are taking the lead in testing alternative revenue mechanisms, which S. 2302 supports through the creation of a new grant program for such pilots.

Infrastructure financing reforms should recognize the nation's diverse needs, avoid shifting costs to states, and prevent disproportionate negative effects on the West's transportation infrastructure. Raising private funds for infrastructure projects in the rural West is extremely challenging, as projects in rural areas with low traffic volumes are unlikely to generate the revenues that would attract investors.

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
The Honorable Charles Schumer
The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
October 11, 2019
Page 2

Western Governors believe that Congress should maintain the historic formula-based approach for the distribution of funds to ensure that both rural and urban states participate in any infrastructure initiative. Reauthorization should give states flexibility to leverage scarce resources using tools that are appropriate for all areas of the West, including those where tolling and public-private partnerships are not feasible. We commend your attention to the WGA's current Chair initiative, [Reimagining the Rural West](#), which will examine several of these issues in the coming months.

Transportation Permitting and Environmental Review

Western Governors support more efficient infrastructure permitting and environmental review processes without shortening timelines for state input and consultation, or compromising natural resource, wildlife, environmental, or cultural values (See WGA Policy Resolution [2018-15](#), *Modernizing Western Infrastructure*). S. 2302's requirements on such review time frames and schedules are important elements of making federal transportation infrastructure permitting and environmental reviews more transparent, predictable and consistent for states and project developers.

Congress should also strongly affirm that states should not be treated as stakeholders or the public for the purposes of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). A reauthorization bill should further require federal agencies to consult with states on the use of state environmental reviews, data and analyses to supplement and inform NEPA reviews. Inclusion of these priorities will further reduce duplication, increase efficiency and help generate local support for projects.

Wildlife, Invasive Species, and Other Issues

Western Governors urge Congress to include provisions for state-supported infrastructure projects that address fish and wildlife crossings and habitat connectivity, as described in WGA Policy Resolution [2019-08](#), *Wildlife Mitigation Corridors and Habitat*. S. 2302 includes several provisions and programs addressing wildlife crossings, habitat connectivity and wildlife-vehicle collisions.

Congress should expand the bill's current language to require the U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI) and U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) to coordinate with states and tribes on activities involving wildlife, habitat and transportation. The bill could also provide support for current state wildlife and transportation agency efforts to coordinate and integrate the consideration of wildlife corridors and habitat connectivity into transportation planning and development.

S. 2302 includes a grant program for states to eliminate or control invasive species along and adjacent to transportation corridor rights-of-way. This is responsive to the Governors' request in WGA Policy Resolution [2019-06](#), *Biosecurity and Invasive Species Management*, for Congress to provide funding and other support for state-directed programs to combat invasive species.

We also commend S. 2302's promotion of alternative vehicle infrastructure and carbon capture, utilization, and sequestration (CCUS), as well as its recognition of the relationship between

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
The Honorable Charles Schumer
The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
October 11, 2019
Page 3

transportation, communications, and cybersecurity. These elements advance the Governors' policy objectives in the [Energy Vision for the West](#), including increasing the development and use of alternative transportation fuels and vehicles and their necessary infrastructure, and WGA Policy Resolutions [2017-09](#), *Western Agriculture*, and [2019-02](#), *Cybersecurity*.

Western Governors appreciate your ongoing efforts to reach bipartisan agreement on a long-term surface transportation reauthorization bill. Please do not hesitate to contact us if we can be of assistance in this vital endeavor.

Sincerely,



Doug Burgum
Governor of North Dakota
Chair, WGA



Kate Brown
Governor of Oregon
Vice Chair, WGA

cc: The Honorable John Barrasso, Chairman, Senate Environment and Public Works Committee
The Honorable Thomas Carper, Ranking Member, Senate Environment and Public Works Committee
The Honorable Roger Wicker, Chairman, Senate Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee
The Honorable Maria Cantwell, Ranking Member, Senate Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee
The Honorable Chuck Grassley, Chairman, Senate Finance Committee
The Honorable Ron Wyden, Ranking Member, Senate Finance Committee
The Honorable Peter DeFazio, Chairman, House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee
The Honorable Sam Graves, Ranking Member, House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee
The Honorable Richard Neal, Chairman, House Ways and Means Committee
The Honorable Kevin Brady, Ranking Member, House Ways and Means Committee