



MEMORANDUM

To: Mort Downey
From: Joanna Turner, Legislative Director, EDC Committee, NGA
Date: November 21, 2008
Subject: NGA Transportation Priorities

While governors acknowledge the importance of rail, aviation, and marine transportation networks to the economic development and competitiveness of the nation, NGA's short-term transportation priorities are focused on the development of a long-term vision for surface transportation infrastructure.

As the nation prepares for the emerging challenge of meeting the needs of the nation's surface transportation system, NGA believes that it is critical that the federal government collaborate with governors on the development of a strategy for surface transportation.

The following are NGA's current priorities for this strategy:

1. Preservation of the intergovernmental partnership

A cooperative federal-state partnership is critical to the success of our nation's surface transportation system. The Governors remain committed to working collaboratively with our federal, local, regional, and private sector partners to design, build, finance, operate, maintain, and improve our surface transportation infrastructure and services.

2. Support for adequate and reliable funding

Congress must identify adequate and reliable sources of revenue for the Highway Trust Fund to ensure that the surface transportation system will continue to serve the needs of the nation. Any federal financing strategy must consider state financial requirements and potential compatibility issues, and must recognize that the needs of states are different. It must complement, not compete with or disable, state and local tax mechanisms.

Governors favor formula-based funding programs and oppose the use of earmarks and set-asides. To the extent that earmarks are employed, Governors urge Congress and the Administration to require that any transportation earmarks align with the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) or other relevant state transportation planning document or state priorities. Governors also oppose discretionary spending programs except where such programs provide funding, awarded through a competitive process, for research, planning, or implementation of solutions to issues with broad regional or national impact. Governors reject the use of any mechanisms that reduce formula funding to the states.

3. Support for increased flexibility

The record of transportation resourcefulness by the states as "centers for innovation," demonstrates collaboration and vision within state borders, across regions, among states, and with our federal partners. To encourage this type of innovation, the federal government must provide states with maximum flexibility to address their unique situations and challenges. For example, some states may choose to apply more of their funding to critical highway projects while others may fund a diverse program encompassing highways, transit, rail, bicycle/pedestrian, and/or ferry options. Others may elect to depart from modally-based programming and use the flexibility to target issue-based solutions for topics such as congestion, mobility, safety, or economic development.

4. Support for a strong federal role in public transportation



Governors support a strong federal role in funding public transportation programs. However, federal funding for public transportation systems must recognize that the needs of communities differ, and must not favor one particular public transportation alternative over any other.