



FORWARD

F A R M B U R E A U®

CONFRONTING THE ISSUES

Transportation AFBF Policy Development May 2008

Issue: The Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act – A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA or SAFETEA-LU) is set to expire on September 30, 2009. Federal transportation legislation is integral to the infrastructure and economic survival of the United States.

Background: SAFETEA was enacted August 10, 2005 as Public Law 109-59, authorizing \$244.1 billion for federal surface transportation programs for highways, highway safety, and transit over the 5-year period 2005-2009. While state and local governments tend to invest more in highways than the federal government, recent federal investments have been growing. In fact, according to the Government Accountability Office, it is not uncommon for federal funding to represent roughly 45% of all highway capital spending in the United States. In addition, the overall structure of most transportation legislation is fairly broad based, covering areas such as transit, motor carrier safety, research, planning, hazardous materials transportation, rail, and finance. Therefore, transportation funding debates rally interests from a variety of sectors, making the legislation difficult to pass and sign into law.

The highway trust fund provides the majority of the funding for federal surface transportation projects and is divided into two separate accounts – highways and mass transit. Although there are several sources of revenue for the trust fund, gasoline and diesel fuel taxes represent about 90% of the income to the accounts. One of the most significant issues in the current tight budget situation is assuring adequate funding levels for the highway trust fund. At current revenue levels, the Federal Highway Administration highway trust fund is expected to realize a \$3.9 billion shortfall in fiscal year (FY) 2009, setting the stage for a precarious budget situation at the time of reauthorization. The previous long term transportation authorization actually expired in 2003 and required two years to negotiate and locate the funds necessary to reauthorize.

Much of the funding in surface transportation bills has traditionally had a bias toward use in urban areas due to their high population concentration. Highway congestion currently exceeds capacity in many major metropolitan areas and near ports utilized for trade and commerce. According to the Congressional Research Service, this congestion trend is expected to continue over time as population and economic growth lead to an increase in demand for freight and passenger travel over the next 30 years.

Congestion reduction, safety programs, environmental regulations, new mass transit construction, and earmarks for high priority projects, brought to the forefront during the SAFETEA debate, are expected to reemerge as significant points during the next reauthorization period.

The President's FY 2009 budget indicates that relieving congestion and enhancing safety remain two of the top priorities for the Department of Transportation (DOT). The administration currently supports efforts including tolls, public-private partnerships, real-time traveler information, and traffic signal timing to help avoid and reduce traffic congestion. In addition, DOT supports activities such as redesigning and constructing roadways and intersections to eliminate hazards, installing guardrails and rumble strips, and collecting crash and other safety-related data to improve the safety of the transportation system in the United States.

Transportation (continued)

SAFETEA reauthorized and created several programs that are directly related to rural America such as formula grants for special needs of elderly individuals and individuals with disabilities, job access and reverse commute grants, the rural transportation accessibility incentive program, and the high risk rural roads program. These, and other, rural programs are important to improving transportation in rural areas.

Questions:

What are the needs of Rural America with regard to SAFETEA reauthorization?

How should Congress address priority transportation safety issues without impeding the unique needs of American agriculture?

During reauthorization of SAFETEA what should Farm Bureau's priorities be in the area of:

- 1) Farm truck safety;
- 2) Commercial Driver's License
- 3) Truck weights and farm exemptions,
- 4) Custom harvesters, and
- 5) Interstate commerce?

Farm Bureau Policy

AFBF policy on transportation is extensive and the lines that pertain are listed below. Please see the "Farm Bureau Policies for 2008" policy book for the language.

Policy 125 – Infrastructure-Highways

Lines 1-3, 6-12, 21-43, 47-59, 74-79, 83-85, 89-99

Policy 126 – Maritime Transportation

Lines 14-15: We support improved infrastructure at U.S. ports to better facilitate the loading of all sizes of ships.

Policy 128 – Transportation

Lines: 1-13, 18-22, 32-61, 81-92 and 102-118