



Memorandum

To: Board of Directors
From: Debbie Hale, Executive Director
Subject: American Public Works Association Washington, DC Visit

During the week of April 1, I participated in the spring meeting of the American Public Works Association's Government Affairs Committee in Washington, DC. It was an excellent time to be in the nation's capital since several committees were beginning work on the reauthorization of the federal transportation act, also known as the "FAST" act.

As part of my work with the Government Affairs Committee, I helped author the transportation policy priorities for the current Congressional session. These priorities are focused on the following three areas: stabilizing funding; streamlining the federal process and promoting safety improvements. These priorities provided the talking points for our discussions with committee staff from both the House and Senate infrastructure committees.

We learned that both the House and Senate are actively involved in drafting infrastructure legislation. The Senate is more focused on surface transportation and update of the FAST Act, while the House is more interested in a multi-area infrastructure package. The process is somewhat disconnected because separate committees work on policy issues and funding for the highway trust fund, but the policy committees acknowledge that additional transportation funding is needed. It was communicated to us that increasing the gas tax is the likely short-term solution, while a vehicle miles-traveled (or other user-type) fee is likely the long-term solution. It was noted that there is broad Congressional support for earmarks, but they are not likely to happen this fiscal year.

I met with Congressman Panetta's chief of staff Joel Bailey and learned that the Congressman now serves on the House Ways and Means Committee. This committee will be responsible for addressing the revenue shortfall in the Highway Trust Fund and has had its first meeting on this issue. There apparently was not a specific discussion of revenue options, but an acknowledgement of the need to begin such discussions. I conveyed to him TAMC's support for the modernization of federal transportation revenues, which have not been adjusted since 1994. I assured him that TAMC appreciates Congressman Panetta's efforts to avert a shortfall in federal funding for critical local safety projects such as US 101 South of Salinas, SR 156 at Castroville Blvd, and the Scenic Highway 68 Corridor.

We also met with the Deputy Administrator for the Federal Highway Administration, Brandye Hendrickson. Ms. Hendrickson elaborated on FHWA's continued support for the Every Day Counts technology and administrative innovations program. She also noted that the Administration recognizes the need to shore up the Highway Trust Fund and that a gas tax increase, a national vehicle miles-traveled pilot program and interstate tolling were under discussion. She added that the Administration supports a full infrastructure bill rather than a separate surface transportation bill.

In addition, we received a presentation from the US Geological Survey on their data mapping programs. The highlights included map information on stream water flows, coastal hazards, and potential earthquake damage. The group also received information on the Federal Permitting Improvement Program at www.permits.performance.gov, which tracks the permit status for projects on the dashboard and establishes a dispute resolution process with the Office of Management and Budget. I intend to reach out to Caltrans to determine which projects could benefit from this process, especially those that are initiating the environmental review (State Route 68 and US 101 South of Salinas).

All in all, it was a productive trip that provided a positive outlook on the transportation funding front. I will continue to monitor the federal program developments through my service on the APWA task force for reauthorization of the federal service transportation act (FAST Act).