

August 21, 2018

The Honorable Mitch McConnell, Majority Leader, United States Senate
The Honorable Charles E. Schumer, Minority Leader, United States Senate
The Honorable Richard Shelby, Chair, Senate Appropriations Committee
The Honorable Patrick J. Leahy, Ranking Member, Senate Appropriations Committee
The Honorable Susan Collins, Chair, Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Transportation,
Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies
The Honorable Jack Reed, Ranking Member, Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on
Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies

The Honorable Paul D. Ryan, Speaker, United States House of Representatives
The Honorable Nancy Pelosi, Minority Leader, United States House of Representatives
The Honorable Rodney Frelinghuysen, Chair, House Appropriations Committee
The Honorable Nita Lowey, Ranking Member, House Appropriations Committee
The Honorable Mario Diaz-Balart, Chair, House Appropriations Subcommittee on
Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies
The Honorable David E. Price, Ranking Member, House Appropriations Subcommittee on
Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies

Subject: FY 2019 Appropriations for Transportation, and Housing and Urban Development, and related agencies (THUD)

Dear Congressional Leaders:

As the organization representing all 50 state departments of transportation (state DOTs), the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico, the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) writes to reiterate our sincere appreciation for your enactment of increased resources to transportation programs in the FY2018 omnibus appropriations bill.

In the coming weeks, as the House and the Senate work to finalize the THUD appropriations package for FY 2019, we first and foremost urge you to fully fund the authorized programs under the Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act. In addition, we urge you to ensure the robust highway formula funding provided in the THUD package adopted by the House of Representatives is maintained in the final package. The \$4 billion of additional highway formula funding included—doubling the amount provided from the general fund in FY 2018—will ensure a predictable, equitable, and nationwide distribution of critical federal dollars.

In addition to recommending that as much of the \$10 billion in additional infrastructure funding commitment that Congress agreed to as part of the two-year budget deal be dedicated for transportation purposes, we continue to urge caution in providing increases in discretionary grant program funding or creating entirely new discretionary grant programs. This is due to the challenges the US Department of Transportation (USDOT) is experiencing in awarding existing discretionary grants in a timely manner. Prior to committing additional discretionary resources in FY2019, we recommend evaluating how the significant funding increase in the TIGER/BUILD discretionary grant program in FY 2018 will be implemented by USDOT, given the Congressionally-mandated expedited timeframe requirement.

Finally, we again ask that you repeal a provision in the FAST Act that requires the rescission of \$7,569,000,000 in unobligated highway program contract authority on July 1, 2020. It is important that Congress repeals this impending rescission now in order to provide stability to the federal highway program. Rescinding unobligated highway contract authority is a budgetary artifice that at best impedes the flexibility of state departments of transportation to meet their individual infrastructure needs, and disrupts transportation planning and timely delivery of projects. At its worst, this FAST Act rescission, along with the cumulative effect of past rescissions, will result in direct funding cuts to states at a time that Congress is looking to support new transportation investments.

We're thankful for record-high levels of transportation appropriations being made in the recent years, and ask that you to continue focusing on investments with a proven record as reflected by the formula highway and transit programs.

If you would like to further discuss, please contact Joung Lee, AASHTO's Policy Director, at 202-624-5818 or jlee@aaashto.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bud Wright". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Bud" and last name "Wright" clearly distinguishable.

Bud Wright
Executive Director
American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials