

# DRIVING AHEAD

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Official newsletter of the  
American Highway Users Alliance

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\* All officers are members of  
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## FEDERAL FRONT

### Our Take on the Highway Bill's Progress

In both the House and Senate, the committees responsible for the highway title are close to introducing and marking-up their key sections of the next transportation bill. The House and Senate will have two very different products and it is important that members of The Highway Users support progress in **both chambers** and understand the pressures that impact their work products.

Both chambers will eliminate lawmakers' earmarks and both will attempt to expedite project delivery and consolidate programs. These efforts are important victories for the public interest.

### Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid is reportedly enthusiastic about a highway bill.

In the House, the Transportation & Infrastructure (T&I) Committee has authorship over all titles (highways, transit, rail, safety) of the bill except the tax title. If the transportation committee comes to an agreement with the Ways and Means Committee on a tax title, the entire bill could proceed quickly through the House with the support of Speaker Boehner and the House leadership. A simple majority is needed to pass the bill. It is unclear if the Democrats will support the bill and the distribution of funding could impact how some Republicans will vote. But it is unlikely that the bill will move to the House floor unless it is assured that 218 Representatives will vote "yea". There are presently 240 Republicans, 193 voting Democrats, and 2 vacant seats.

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### Highway Users Testifies before the House Subcommittee on Highways & Transit

Highway Users President & CEO Greg Cohen recently presented testimony outlining our reauthorization priorities to the Subcommittee on Highways and Transit. We focused on the urgent need for a well-funded surface transportation bill that:

- Reduces waste,
- Streamlines project reviews and
- Addresses the key national priorities articulated by our Policy and Government Affairs Committee.

During the testimony, Cohen emphasized the parallels between the stabilizing economy and increased highway use. He specifically noted, "As highway travel rebounds users are feeding the economy by working, shopping and recreating...but with the growth of travel, congestion is once again rebounding." As the nation's economic recovery continues to gather steam, vehicle miles traveled continues to rise. Cohen remarked,

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**Keeping the process going in both chambers is extremely important ... failure could cause Congress to demand sharp funding cuts under any extension.**

**(Our Take on the Highway Bill's Progress...**Continued from page 1)

The House is enforcing a conservative budget rule (a.k.a. the Paul Ryan budget), which requires major cuts in nearly every federal program – highways are no exception. The cuts in the highway program are intended to force spending levels down to the point that the Highway Trust Fund remains solvent. It is anticipated that these funding levels would only allow for about a \$219 billion bill for surface transportation (about the same level as in the 1998 TEA-21 bill). This would include highway funding cuts by as much as 33% next year and by about 25% over six-years as compared to the 2004-2009 “SAFETEA-LU” levels.

It is important to note that T&I Chairman Mica’s hands are tied by the House budget rules. Mica MUST comply with the budget rules in order to get a vote on the House floor. To find the cuts, the transportation committee is expected to reform the program in a way that prioritizes national highway needs, consolidating highway programs to establish defensible federal priorities, like the National Highway System. Most other types of transportation programs in the highway title are expected to be eligible for funding but, given sharp budget constraints, States will be able to pick and choose which programs make the most sense for them without dozens of mandates. While funding cuts are outrageous given the worsening state of our road infrastructure, a better return-on-investment for motorists may lead to more public support for increased funding in the long-term. It is also important to note that the House proposal would save the Highway Trust Fund from a potential collapse at the end of 2012.

The Senate has not approved a budget, which gives the Environment & Public Works (EPW) Committee more room to maneuver. Operating under a bipartisan “Big 4” agreement, Committee Chairman Barbara Boxer, Ranking

Member Jim Inhofe, Subcommittee Chairman Max Baucus, and Ranking Member David Vitter jointly announced support for a \$339 billion funding level for all surface transportation programs over six years. The bipartisan authorship of the bill is important, because a bipartisan 60-vote supermajority is needed for passage. Overwhelming bipartisan support is also helpful to overcoming the many time-consuming procedural hurdles in the Senate. Unfortunately, the Boxer/Inhofe/Baucus/Vitter proposal appears to create a significant shortfall (about \$75 billion) in the Highway Trust Fund. It will be difficult to “find” revenue to make up the difference. Baucus, who also chairs the tax-writing Finance Committee, has warned that a two-year “Plan B” option might also need to be considered if the six-year funding shortfall cannot be resolved. This plan would allow for highway funding to remain at or

near current levels but would likely leave the Highway Trust Fund without cash when the bill expires. EPW Committee Chairman Boxer has committed to making the six-year option “Plan A” – and a markup of the highway title is likely to occur in the next few weeks.

Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid is reportedly

enthusiastic about a highway bill and is likely to reserve floor time when all titles are ready for a vote. However, in the Senate there are multiple committees in addition to EPW writing titles of the bill. The transit title is written by the Senate Banking, Housing & Urban Affairs Committee. The safety titles, which include sections on vehicles, driver behavior, and motor carrier safety, are handled by the Senate Commerce, Science & Transportation Committee. With so many Senators involved in authorship as well as the Senate’s well-deserved reputation as the world’s most deliberative body, Majority Leader Reid will have to press very hard to get all of the titles ready for a Senate floor vote this summer.



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Assuming both chambers complete their work, a conference committee must resolve the differences between the two bills and get a final bill enacted before the end of the year. Unless the Senate and House agree on a budget (when pigs fly), the House will have to waive its budget rules to allow for final passage of a compromise bill. Typically, House rules are waived to pass conference reports.

Fiscal realities may dampen some stakeholders' enthusiasm for the next highway bill but we recognize that keeping the process going in both chambers is extremely important. Many potential procedural and substantive roadblocks will pop up and need to be overcome. Failure to enact a new bill

could cause Congress (particularly the House) to demand sharp funding cuts under any extension beyond September 30th, leading to the worst possible outcome: less funding for highways, no certainty on program stability, and a continuation of wasteful programs that erode public support.

Ultimately, if a bill can be passed, the policies associated with it will be extremely important to highway users. We work closely with the Committees' staff to advise them on what should be in the bill. While we work on many issues, at the highest level our focus is on saving the Highway Trust Fund, eliminating waste, keeping Americans safe on the road, and creating the political conditions that will allow us to increase revenue in the future. This summer, it will be critical for Congress to show the American people that they have acted decisively to curb earmarks, waste, and tax diversion. Over the long term, only the support of the American taxpayers will convince Congress to set user fees at a rate that will re-establish the United States' place as the world's leader in transportation. ■

## Helping to Bridge Tourism with Highway Issues

The Highway Users has been working with our members and allied groups to get the travel and tourism industry more engaged with lawmakers on various highway issues. The ad-hoc group, which represents national associations, issued a policy statement to Congress that reminds lawmakers of the economic importance of strong National Highway System (NHS) recreation and businesses. The NHS carries 90% of America's tourist travel. We appended the policy statement to our testimony at the March 30th hearing of the Subcommittee on Highways & Transit. To view the testimony, visit [www.highways.org](http://www.highways.org). ■

## GET INVOLVED!

### Sustainable Mobility

The Highway Users is soliciting input in meeting with members to discuss the development of a sustainable highway mobility promotional paper and video. We are interested in learning more from our members about how you are contributing to keeping America

### OUR GOAL IS TO REMIND POLICYMAKERS THAT HIGHWAYS AND MOBILITY ARE SOCIETAL "GOODS" ...

moving in a fiscally and environmentally sustainable way. Our goal is to remind policymakers that highways and mobility are societal "goods" and to provide examples that demonstrate the benefits of a sound infrastructure system. The audience for this research project is policymakers, elected officials, and the general public. This effort will also aim to rebut the notion that sustainable transportation means getting people out of their cars and not building roads. If you would like to contribute information to this project, please contact us at [info@highways.org](mailto:info@highways.org). ■



## Facebook Grassroots Army Continues to Grow

The Highway Users Facebook page has amassed more than 14,000 fans. Our network of Facebook fans has proved pivotal on previous legislative campaigns. If you haven't already done so, please log onto [www.facebook.com/highwayusers](http://www.facebook.com/highwayusers) and friend us today!

**“ Our network of Facebook fans has proved pivotal on previous legislative campaigns. ”**

Thanks for your support. And, if you wish to help us continue growing this grassroots army of supports, contact Cheryl Hollins at [cherylhollins@highways.org](mailto:cherylhollins@highways.org) for sponsorship opportunities. ■

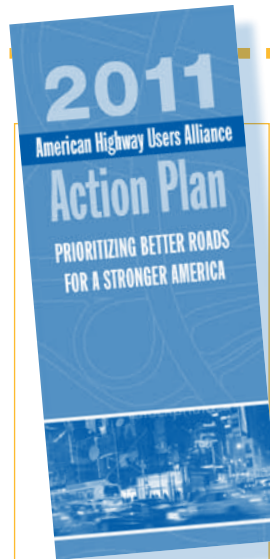
## Exhibiting at the 2011 ConExpo Show

From March 22-26, The Highway Users exhibited at the 2011 ConExpo show in Las Vegas. The exhibition is one of the largest construction trade shows in the world, with more than 120,000 attendees and 2,400+ exhibitors. For the



second straight show, The Highway Users participated as a Supporting Organization. The ConExpo show takes place every three years in Las Vegas and draws attendees and companies from all around the world. The show was the largest gathering in North America since 2008 for the construction materials and equipment manufacturing industries. ■

The American Highway Users Alliance is the broadest-based transportation coalition in Washington, DC, focused exclusively on promoting highway system performance, roadway safety improvements and freedom of mobility. The Highway Users was founded in 1932 as a not-for-profit organization.



### 2011 Action Plan

Enclosed is The Highway Users 2011 Action Plan detailing our legislative priorities and activities for the year. Please look it over and let us know your thoughts.

## WHAT'S AHEAD

### 2011 Meeting Dates Mark Your Calendars!

**TUESDAY, OCTOBER 25, 2011**

#### ANNUAL MEETING

Please save the date! The Highway Users will host its Annual Meeting in Washington, DC. All members are encouraged to attend!

### (Highway Users Testifies...Cont. from page 1)

“At three trillion vehicle miles per year, we have almost reached the peak pre-recession travel levels of November 2007.”

Cohen also stated that The Highway Users strongly supports a self-sustaining highway-user supported Highway Trust Fund. We advocate for the federal fuel tax and believe that, if the user fee rate were properly set, it would provide stable revenue well into the future. Unfortunately, the current rate is simply inadequate to maintain our nation's enormous infrastructure needs.

The two-day hearing featured several Highway Users' members, including witnesses representing the American Bus Association, American Traffic Safety Services Association, American Trucking Associations, Greyhound, Intelligent Transportation Society of America, National Stone Sand and Gravel Association, NATSO, Owner-Operator Independent Drivers Association, and Parsons Brinckerhoff. To access our testimony or other witness testimonies, log onto [www.transportation.house.gov](http://www.transportation.house.gov). ■