

# 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

### Senator Max Baucus Urges Grassroots Mobilization for Highway Bill

One of the U.S. Senate's powerhouses, Finance Committee Chairman Max Baucus (D-Mont.), urged The Highway Users to lead the charge for highway authorization by engineering a grassroots outcry for Congressional action. "The impetus for a transportation bill will come from outside the beltway, not inside the beltway," the Senator told members of The Highway Users who attended the lively Expert Policy Panel discussions on June 23 in Washington, DC.

**“Congress does not lead, it follows.  
We do what people back home want.”**

Action on the highway bill will come if constituents of Members of Congress – not just the Senate Finance Committee – understand that our nation's infrastructure is critical. "Congress does not lead," Sen. Baucus said, "it follows. We do what people back home want."

During the day-long series of expert policy panels, Highway Users President & CEO Greg Cohen revealed that "traditional lobbying for a highway bill" is not as effective today as it once was primarily because of Congressional reluctance to increase user fees – even for a Highway Trust Fund that is nearly bankrupt. Cohen announced that The Highway

Users will build up its army of grassroots supporters through social networking and other avenues. With 6,700+ fans mobilized to date on the Highway Users Facebook page – facebook.com/highwayusers – Cohen announced the goal of 10,000 grassroots supporters by year's end. From that base, The Highway Users will build a core group of vocal activists who attend townhall forums, participate on radio call-in shows and galvanize the cry for increased highway funding. "We are supplementing our strong advocacy efforts with a robust grassroots army of vocal supporters," Cohen said.

Sen. Baucus applauded The Highway Users' for its new thinking and efforts to reach out to the motoring public. Through teamwork among Highway Users' member organizations and other coalitions, a

(Continued on page 3)



Senator Max Baucus (center) was presented with a prestigious "Highway Hero" Award by the American Highway Users Alliance. The award is given to lawmakers for their outstanding contributions to the highway community. Governor Bill Graves (left), President of the American Trucking Associations and Chairman of The Highway Users, co-presented the award with Greg Cohen.

## Current Highway Policies Reveal Users' Frustrations & Challenges

On June 23, members of The Highway Users participated in frank discussions about the state of thinking in Washington, DC concerning surface transportation policy. Policy experts led six panels that garnered heated comments reflecting members' frustration about Congressional inertia on the transportation bill. Here are some highlights:

- PANEL #1**  
**The Surface Transportation Authorization Bill: Consequences of Current Failures & Opportunities to Change the Dynamic**



Nancy Floreen (not pictured), President of the Montgomery County Council, joined Senate EPW staff members on Panel #1. She gave a frank assessment of the financial burdens state and county governments are bearing due to Congressional inaction on a highway bill.

Kathy Dedrick and Andrew Dohrmann, staff with the Senate Environment & Public Works Committee, agreed that financing the bill is the roadblock. They expressed hope that the committee's daily work on the policy in the bill will press Congress to attack the financing dilemma. Ms. Dedrick said a draft bill might surface sometime in September.

Panelist Nancy Floreen, President of the Montgomery County Council, "vented" about the impact of Congressional inaction on local transportation budgets. She encouraged The Highway Users to establish the broadest possible coalition to move Congress forward. Robert McKenna (Motor & Equipment Manufacturers Association) said that improvements in automobile and truck efficiency are resulting in fuel savings that will affect

revenue going into the Highway Trust Fund. Decreased revenue cannot be ignored, he cautioned.

- PANEL #2**  
**Climate Change Update: Proposed Legislation, Regulations and What They Mean for Highways, Vehicles & Fuels**

During an energetic dissection of the components of the Kerry/Lieberman bill, panelist Bill Malley of Perkins Coie, LLP said that transportation issues are scattered throughout the legislation. "Under the Cap-and-Trade criteria, so many offsets are allowed that the total impact may be lessened, let alone difficult to calculate," he said. Panelist John Shaw of the Portland Cement Association urged participants to view the current draft as an opportunity for improvement. A member of the audience pointed out that the gas tax increase in the Kerry/Lieberman bill provides few benefits for highway users and sets a precedent of tax diversion for the future.

- PANEL #3**  
**Fresh Views & Research You Can Use on the Economic & Social Impacts of Congestion**

Sam Staley of the Reason Foundation advised that in 1982, only one urban area experienced "severe" congestion: Los Angeles. But by 2030, 55 out of 85 major congestion areas tracked around the country will have similar congestion levels. Congestion is a problem for many reasons, according to Staley, including the shrinking effect it has on American business opportunities. Congestion reduces access to labor, suppliers, and customers. To expand the "opportunity circle," he advised that the road system needs to be managed more efficiently, more capacity needs to be built, and the transportation network needs to be redesigned. Marcus Bowman of 3G Mobility revealed data showing that the environmental impacts of driving are improving dramatically and that the cost of driving could decline rapidly in coming years. According



to Wendell Cox of Demographia there is a significant correlation between mobility and economic growth but many in the urban planning community do not understand that “time is money.”

## • PANEL #5

**Today's Transportation Buzzwords:  
Livability & Sustainability**



According to Kathleen Marvaso of AAA, “Without sufficient investment in highway transportation, livable communities cannot thrive.” She said that the disconnect from voters on the importance of transportation is a huge communications challenge. Former Kansas Governor Bill Graves said he thinks that states and counties have a better understanding of what livability means than the federal government.

To view the PowerPoint presentations of selected panelists, visit [www.highways.org](http://www.highways.org). ■

Highway Users Chairman Gov. Bill Graves (American Trucking Associations)

questioned why the Environmental Protection Agency is addressing transportation. He expressed concern that the trucking industry will pay three times: once for cleaner technology; a second time through fuel taxes; and a third time into an EPA fund to curtail emissions.

## Hostile Anti-highway Climate

**The** mood among pro-highway advocates in Washington has gone from disappointment to anger over the past year, as the outlook for a new highway bill remains bleak and USDOT's policies become increasingly hostile to personal mobility and trucking. The lack of Congressional leadership in support of road funding continues to frustrate highway advocates, who generally support the user-fee principle for a good bill.

Since the summer of 2008 when the Highway Trust Fund became insolvent, it has been “bailed-out” three times, with transfers from the General Fund of the Treasury. The American Highway Users Alliance has supported the transfers, arguing that they should be viewed as reimbursements of past

(Continued on page 4)



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**(Senator Max Baucus Urges Grassroots  
Mobilization...Continued from page 1)**

concerted public education effort will be launched to “focus national attention” on the critical need for highway infrastructure investment.

In addition to his role on the powerful Senate Finance Committee, Senator Baucus also chairs the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee's Transportation and Infrastructure Subcommittee. ■

## GET INVOLVED

**Highway Users Amasses 6,700+  
Grassroots Supporters  
Become a Fan!**

Log onto [facebook.com/highwayusers](http://facebook.com/highwayusers)  
and [twitter.com/highwayusers](http://twitter.com/highwayusers)

**Help Build Our  
Grassroots Army!**

**We need to mobilize forces to  
press Congress for action on the  
Highway bill.**

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**(Hostile Anti-highway Climate...** Continued from page 3)

raids from the once-strong fund. However, spending continues to exceed highway user revenues and the next shortfall will likely come in 2011.

Meanwhile, some senior USDOT officials have been receptive to anti-highway groups who support increasing the diversion of highway funds for non-highway uses; oppose new highway capacity and congestion relief projects; demand more arduous and expensive environmental reviews; involve the federal government in purely local planning, zoning, and street design decisions; and generally view driving and mobility as a public nuisance.

The anti-highway mentality is pervasive in the draft changes to the Department of Transportation’s strategic plan, where strong support for transit, rail, bicycling, and walking contrasts with negative statements about automobiles, trucks, and other private motorized transportation.

Unfortunately, the Administration has taken a revisionist approach to the national transportation commission’s recommendation to make the program “performance-based” by establishing criteria that are hostile to highway users’ interests.

To raise the profile of our nation’s highway infrastructure, The Highway Users is supplementing its lobbying strategy by building a grassroots army that will press for Congressional action. (See the cover story.) ■

## Fuel Tax Diversions

In the Senate, the failure to write a highway bill contrasts with the drafting of a new climate bill, known as the American Power Act or the Kerry-Lieberman bill.

“... this legislation would tax surface transportation fuel to pay for non-transportation projects that reduce carbon emissions.”

In effect, this legislation would tax surface transportation fuel to pay for non-transportation projects that reduce carbon emissions. If enacted, it would tax surface transportation fuels by at least \$19.8 billion in the first year (2013), but only deposit \$2.5 billion into the Highway Trust Fund. In future years, the taxes would increase but highway funding would remain capped at \$2.5 billion. In addition, the trust fund money could only be used if a state adopted a transportation plan designed to reduce carbon emissions.

Many highway supporters predict that the regulations governing these plans would constrain states from new highway projects, and require alternative projects that reduce highway travel by changing behaviors and densifying land use plans. The Highway Users joined the road builders, truckers, general contractors, public transit advocates, and others to oppose the draft bill. ■

## WHAT'S AHEAD

### Upcoming Meetings

**OCTOBER 12, 2010**

**Highway Users  
Annual Meeting**

**Washington, DC**

**SAVE THE DATE!**

### Prep Election Candidates on Top Highway Issues with *The Road to Congress* Candidate Binder

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info@highways.org for a FREE copy.

