

MAP-21 Transportation Reauthorization Policies Staff Recommendation and *Discussion*

Below is a list of 17 staff recommendations for the federal transportation authorization, specifically MAP-21. Given the political climate, and the fact that the House has not yet released language to their bill, it is unlikely that the bill in print today will not be the bill implemented. As such, the committee may need to revisit these recommendations, as well as additional recommendations, at future meetings.

Staff comments (in italics) follow each recommendation.

General

1. Support the use of current funding levels.
Staff considered the following issues with this recommendation:
 - *The Highway Trust Fund is bankrupt, and unable to sustain current funding levels.*
 - *It is extremely unlikely that someone will find an acceptable way to raise revenues.*
 - *Ideally, we would have more than two years of stability in funding levels.*
 - *Realistically, the level of funding is more important than the stability.*
2. Support bipartisan nature of bill.
The Senate Environment and Public Works Committee approved MAP-21 with an 18-0 vote. Noting the rarity of such bipartisanship, staff recommends we include a note of appreciation in communications with Congress. This bipartisanship should be continued as the reauthorization moves through the remainder of the Senate and House.
3. Appreciate the focus to consolidate and streamline programs, but have a few specific concerns, outlined below.
The League has long standing policy supporting streamlining of programs. However, some regions – primarily OCTA – have compiled a list of technical and clarifying changes. Staff recommends that we support the requested changes as agreed to by the California Consensus Group. Regarding the consolidation of programs, staff has some specific concerns outlined below in the CMAQ program.
4. No comment/position on elimination of earmarks.
There are always winners and losers with earmarks, even within our own membership. Staff recommends no comment on the elimination of earmarks.
5. Support the increase to the Transportation Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Program.
6. Request CEQA/NEPA reciprocity program.
California was the one and only state to take part in the pilot for the NEPA delegation. Noting a few exceptions, the program has worked well and decreased project delivery time. While this program is continue (and made permanent) in MAP-21, staff recommends that we take the opportunity to again request true CEQA/NEPA reciprocity.

National Highway Performance Program (new program)

7. Support focus on existing infrastructure maintenance and preservation over new capacity. *This has been League policy for several years. With the Local Streets and Roads Needs Assessment showing a backlog of \$79 billion for the local system, this should continue to be a priority.*

Transportation Mobility Program (formerly Surface Transportation Program, or STP)

8. Oppose the elimination of 10% set-aside for Transportation Enhancements (TE) projects. *See #12 below.*
9. Support current STP funding formulas (62.5% to MPOs, 37.5% to state) over formulas in MAP-21 (50% to MPOs, 50% to state). *If changed, this could represent decreased funding to cities, as many of the projects cities undertake are not eligible for the state programs.*

Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program (CMAQ) (existing program)

10. Oppose the inclusion of Safe Routes to Schools and Recreational Trails in what was formerly a 10% set aside for only Transportation Enhancements (TE). *Under the current authorization, these programs are funded from the STP. TE, alone, receives a 10% set aside in that program. Staff also notes that CMAQ may not be the most appropriate funding for these programs. These programs will likely face fierce competition with environmental groups for this funding.*
11. Oppose the elimination of dedicated funding for off-system bridge funding. *This program currently receives a dedicated set aside of 15% of bridge funding. That set aside is eliminated.*
12. Oppose the requirement that a certain amount of CMAQ funding be spent on diesel retrofits of construction equipment. This should be an optional use. *Transportation funding is already scarce, California should not be required to spend this money when other funding options are available. In addition, we should have complete flexibility to address health issues in our regions and state.*

National Freight Network Program (new program)

13. Support the goal to improve the freight movement network. However, local governments (MPOs) should have a seat at the table. *Local governments have primarily used the TIGER grants over the last few years to fund these projects. This program would provide ongoing funding and relieve some pressure on local governments to use their limited funding for these larger projects. However, the current*

language of the bill gives no seat at the table for local governments (MPOs), who have a significant interest in these large projects.

Highway Safety Improvement Program (existing program)

14. No position.

This is an existing program with minimal impacts for cities. Staff does note that rural areas are concerned with the elimination of the High Risk Rural Roads Program.

Federal Lands and Tribal Transportation Program (existing program)

15. No position.

This is an existing program with minimal impacts for cities.

Projects of National and Regional Significance (new program)

16. Support.

Local governments have primarily used the TIGER grants over the last few years to fund these projects. This program would provide ongoing funding and relieve some pressure on local governments to use their limited funding for these larger projects.

MPO Designation (policy change)

17. Option 1: Request that existing MPOs be grandfathered in. Option 2 (if Option 1 is denied): Support a California exemption.

Depending on how you count, California would lose between six and ten MPOs. The following MPOs do not have an “urbanized core” of 200,000: AMBAG, SLOCOG, Santa Barbara Assn. of Governments, Shasta County RPTA, Butte County, Madera, Merced, Tulare, Kings, and Tahoe. The dissolution of this many MPOs, arguably any MPOs, would have a dramatic impact on the state. California, more than any other state, has embraced the idea of a MPO and built significant law and policy around them. Dissolved MPOs would no longer be eligible for federal planning dollars. Local officials would lose their voice on planning and programming decisions in those areas.