

CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

R. BRUCE JOSTEN
EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT
GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS

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WASHINGTON, D.C. 20062-2000
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April 14, 2015

The Honorable Jim Renacci
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Renacci:

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the world's largest business federation representing the interests of more than three million businesses of all sizes, sectors, and regions, as well as state and local chambers and industry associations, and dedicated to promoting, protecting and defending America's free enterprise system, applauds the introduction of the bipartisan "Bridge to Sustainable Infrastructure Act," which is a valuable addition to the current debate over how to sustainably fund the nation's surface transportation infrastructure and presents a workable solution to addressing the impending Highway Trust Fund (HTF) shortfall and its solvency for the next decade.

Congress and the administration must solve the HTF revenue problem by this summer in order to, at a minimum, maintain or, preferably, to increase investment and move from perpetual uncertainty back to multi-year legislation with firewalls and funding guarantees.

By indexing the gas and diesel taxes to inflation prospectively, the Bridge to Sustainable Infrastructure Act would raise approximately \$27.5 billion. This revenue would be used to maintain current funding levels through the end of 2016. Then, in order to help reach a truly long-term solution to funding the HTF, this legislation would create a bipartisan, bicameral commission charged with determining a path forward for sustainable funding. If that commission fails to come up with a proposal, or if Congress rejects the revenue proposal, there would be an automatic increase in user fees. This approach would provide Congress the opportunity to identify long-term revenue sources to ensure the federal government continues to support highway and public transportation investments. Even if the commission fails to make a recommendation, the Bridge to Sustainable Infrastructure Act would still end the damaging pattern of short-term patches for road, bridge, and transit programs.

The Chamber believes the simplest, most straight-forward, and effective way to generate enough revenue for federal transportation programs in the short-run is by increasing and indexing existing user fees.

Over time, however, a nominal gas tax rate will decline in real terms while the costs associated with funding roads will increase with inflation. This problem with the current system was highlighted by the work of two blue-ribbon commissions created by the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users —The National Surface Transportation Policy and Revenue Study Commission and the National Surface Transportation Infrastructure Financing Commission.

The Chamber encourages Congress to re-examine the work of the two commissions that considered the full array of reports and research on the topic of federal revenues for surface transportation. The Finance Commission, in particular, took an analytical, highly structured approach to assessing revenue options. The array of transportation-related revenue sources—the underpinning of multi-year certainty for federal transportation programs—that can provide sustainable, predictable, ongoing funding has not changed in the years since the commissions released their reports.

The Chamber commends you for offering a solution to end the perpetual HTF crisis that would require Congress to act rather than kick the can down the road. We appreciate your leadership on critical issue and look forward to working with the full Congress to restore certainty to the nation's highway, public transportation, and highway safety programs.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "R. Bruce Josten". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "R." being a simple flourish, "Bruce" written in a clear cursive, and "Josten" written in a more complex cursive style.

R. Bruce Josten