

KEY VOTE ALERT!



U.S. CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
Congressional & Public Affairs
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TO THE MEMBERS OF THE UNITED STATES CONGRESS:

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce strongly supports H.R. 22, the “Fixing America’s Surface Transportation Act,” which would provide important policy enhancements to improve federal highway, transit and safety programs, as well as help create jobs and help grow America’s economy. We urge you to vote for this legislation.

The Chamber believes that this five year reauthorization provides meaningful certainty to states and communities across the country to begin to address the backlog of much-needed transportation and transit projects.

We commend the work of the conference committee and the leadership of House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee Chairman Bill Shuster and Ranking Member Peter DeFazio, and Senate Environment and Public Works Committee Chairman Jim Inhofe and Ranking Member Barbara Boxer. This legislation is an important step towards providing long term certainty needed for planning, financing and execution of surface transportation projects.

However, the FAST Act is an incomplete solution for addressing critical transit and surface transportation priorities. Once the FAST Act is law, the Chamber urges Congress to undertake a rigorous examination of long term funding options to increase investment for America’s surface transportation program.

Moreover, the Chamber is dismayed that some funding for this bill would be provided by a variety of one-time offsets unrelated to transportation, particularly the adjustment of the Federal Reserve dividend rate, which sets a dangerous precedent by allowing Federal Reserve funds to be used as a silent tax on the economy.

Going forward, all options need to be on the table – including an increase in the gas tax – to ensure the viability of transit and transportation programs. The Chamber looks forward to working with the House, Senate, and Administration to develop a stable, secure, and sufficient revenue stream to fund surface infrastructure projects.

In addition, the Chamber believes that surface transportation projects should not be paid for by an expansion of civil penalties. Moreover, we have significant questions regarding the way in which the whistleblower program contained in Section 24351 of the bill would work in practice.

Beyond funding, the Chamber is disappointed that the conference report does not include provisions included in the House-passed version of H.R. 22 that would clarify federal preemption of meal and rest break requirements and state bans on “piece rate” pay. Such clarification is necessary to ensure motor carriers can continue to operate efficiently and competitively under nationally-consistent federal regulations as Congress intended, rather than being forced to adhere to a 50-state patchwork of rules.

Beyond surface transportation issues, the Chamber strongly supports provisions of the conference report to reform and reauthorize the U.S. Export-Import Bank (Ex-Im). Not only has Ex-Im directly supported American jobs, it operates at no cost to the U.S. taxpayer. Failure to secure a long term reauthorization of Ex-Im would amount to unilateral disarmament in the face of other governments’ far more aggressive export credit programs, which have provided their own exporters with significant financing support in recent years. Since Ex-Im’s charter lapsed on July 1, American companies have been operating at a unique disadvantage in global markets, and lost sales and lost jobs are accumulating.

The Chamber also strongly supports the permit streamlining provisions of the conference report. They would improve and speed up the review and approval of permitting for complex development projects, ensuring that projects are not unnecessarily delayed or cancelled because of ineffective and uncoordinated reviews by federal agencies.

The Chamber strongly supports legislative reforms that would protect consumers and investors and assist the capital formation necessary to spur economic growth and create jobs. The Financial Services section of the conference report achieves these goals. This section combines a number of bipartisan bills that build upon the success of the Jumpstart Our Business Startups Act (JOBS Act). They facilitate the growth of Emerging Growth Companies (EGCs) and streamline disclosures by eliminating unnecessary duplicative disclosures. They also fulfill the intent of Congress by clarifying requirements for Small Business Investment Company (SBIC) advisors, eliminating confusion over privacy notices, and making common sense reforms for smaller financial institutions.

The Chamber strongly supports the H.R. 22 FAST Act conference report and urges you to vote for this legislation. The Chamber will consider including votes on, or in relation to, this legislation in our annual *How They Voted* scorecard.

Sincerely,



R. Bruce Josten