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The road to a federal infrastructure package begins with a Highway Trust Fund fix

By THE TRANSPORTATION CONSTRUCTION COALITION AND AMERICANS FOR TRANSPORTATION MOBILITY | 03/01/2018 02:35 PM EST

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American greatness is never written in the past tense. President Lincoln saw the nation's transcontinental railroad as a bold bid to unite a divided republic, while President Eisenhower's Interstate Highway System paved the way for expanded opportunities for all Americans and decades of economic growth.

Today's political leaders have the chance to follow in Lincoln and Eisenhower's footsteps by making bold investments in infrastructure. The pavement on much of our interstate highways may be top notch, but the performance of the system and its links to modal hubs is deteriorating. The 62-year-old system is outdated, overused, and underfunded. Ever-increasing congestion is causing a huge drag on the economy every year. Traffic gridlock drives up the cost of every good that American companies make, buy and export. It's a recurring \$260 billion "hidden tax" that is likely to increase in future years.

As with our past leaders, we are once again called not simply to rebuild what once was, but to envision and create the transportation network tomorrow demands. Like the recently enacted tax law, if federally led and done right, modernizing our transportation network could reduce costs, while making U.S. businesses more productive and competitive.

By far, the most critical transportation issue facing Congress is ensuring the long-term viability of the federal Highway Trust Fund. Each year, the fund provides about half the money states dedicate to capital investments in highways and bridges. However, the fund is in peril.

To keep it solvent and preserve existing infrastructure investment levels, lawmakers have transferred nearly \$145 billion from the U.S. Treasury General Fund. Without new revenue, starting in October 2020, states will face a 40 percent cut in funding for needed transportation improvements. Absent any congressional action, state transportation departments likely will start pulling back or delaying transportation improvements as early as 2019.

Two key priorities must be met:

- **Priority 1:** Provide an expanded and sustainable revenue solution to support and grow future Highway Trust Fund-supported investments as Congress and the Trump administration work to develop an infrastructure investment package. A bipartisan 253 members of the House went on record in 2017 as supporting a Highway Trust Fund fix as part of tax reform. The Transportation Construction Coalition and Americans for Transportation Mobility agree that any trust fund solution "should entail a long-term, dedicated, user-based revenue stream."
- **Priority 2:** Any additional funds provided in an infrastructure package this year should be invested in projects that will facilitate long-term regional and national economic growth and create new jobs. This is a chance to ensure enduring benefits to both the economy and America's infrastructure.

With Republicans, Democrats and President Trump all voicing support for an infrastructure bill, this is a rare chance for all parties to envision how Washington can come together to accomplish big things for their constituents. This is a generational opportunity to turn blueprints and big thinking into a 21st century infrastructure network.

Let's get moving.

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Established in 1996, the Transportation Construction Coalition (TCC) includes 31 national associations and labor unions with a direct market interest in the federal transportation programs. It is co-chaired by the American Road & Transportation Builders Association (ARTBA) and the Associated General Contractors (AGC) of America.

The Americans for Transportation Mobility (ATM) Coalition formed in 2000. It brings together business, the labor and union sectors, transportation stakeholders, and the public to advocate for a robust transportation infrastructure grid in the United States. This includes promoting ongoing and sustainable funding through policies and broad-based initiatives.