

Transportation Staff Meeting

April 30, 2014

2:15 PM*

CMGC: 278

AGENDA

1. TCC Agenda Review (Burke)

Description:

Review of the May 1 TCC agenda.

2. MAP-21 Reauthorization (Cook & Hansen)

Description:

The purpose of this item will be to determine if the CRTPO should devote time/resources to developing policy positions on reauthorization.

Attachment: Centralina COG MAP-21 letter

Phone Access Number: 704-432-5485

Go To Meeting Access: <https://global.gotomeeting.com/join/610111357>

**The meeting will begin shortly after the conclusion of the ITS webinar.*



April 10, 2014

The Honorable Virginia Foxx
2350 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Richard Hudson
429 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Robert Pittenger
224 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Patrick McHenry
2334 Rayburn Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representatives Foxx, Hudson, McHenry, and Pittenger,

As chairman of the Centralina Council of Governments, I help lead the nine-county greater Charlotte region in meeting challenges related to transportation, land use, economic development, and environmental preservation. It is with these issues in mind I write you regarding the upcoming reauthorization of the surface transportation program. The greater Charlotte region is home to two million residents and is represented by several transportation planning organizations. I have worked with the leadership from each of these organizations to establish our local needs in the reauthorization, due September 30, 2014 when the current Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP-21) expires.

Our region is comprised of urban, suburban, and rural communities with a wide range of transportation needs. Despite these differences, the transportation planning organizations were able to agree on the following principles to be considered in MAP-21 reauthorization.

- 1. Duration:** The MAP-21 program runs two years, which is much too short a duration to provide appropriate guidance and predictability to states and local governments, as well as to the private sector that builds projects through this program. We believe a six-year program will provide appropriate stability to the program.
- 2. Funding Levels:** While unmet transportation needs remain in our region, as with much of the nation, at a minimum we support the funding levels of the current MAP-21 program. Additionally, we support the continued flexibility in applying funds to capacity expansion or to maintenance.
- 3. Revenues:** For the first half-century of its existence, the highway trust fund and transit fund were funded through user fees, and did not add to the national debt. Since 2008, and for the foreseeable future, funding transportation projects requires regular transfers from the General Fund, with regular political posturing and brinksmanship that is counterproductive to transportation planning and project funding. We believe that the next surface transportation program should return to a funding strategy based on user fees, which have historically been gasoline and diesel fuel taxes.

525 North Tryon Street – 12th Floor
Charlotte, North Carolina 28202
Phone: 704-372-2416 Fax: 704-347-4710
www.centralina.org



This position means we accept the need to raise taxes on these fuels to pay for the program. We recognize that changing travel demand patterns and increased fuel economy standards are expected to reduce future revenues, but we consider an increase in fuel taxes to be an interim funding strategy until we may transition to a future funding source.

We do not support changes in the tax structure to pay for the surface transportation program; rather we believe the principle of user payment of the system is the most appropriate policy. By following this principle, the federal government will avoid uncertainty regarding an issue that is without party designation.

- 4. Regulation:** We believe the federal government applies excessive regulations and requirements on the use of federal funds on even the smallest of projects. When federal funds are used, project costs may increase 50-100% on locally-administered projects meant to add bicycle and pedestrian facilities.

In addition, we support the current 50,000 minimum urbanized area population standard for Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs). The recent proposal by President Obama to increase the minimum population to 200,000 would affect approximately half of the nation's 400+ MPOs. We believe such a change is unnecessary at this time.

We appreciate the work you do on our behalf in Washington, but we urge you to develop a stable long-term surface transportation program for this nation. Continued stop-gap fiscal solutions harm this country and its goal to improve its transportation network. We urge you to work collectively to approve a program in time to avert interruptions to the transportation industry that ensures the long-term solvency of the highway trust and transit funds.

To discuss this issue further, please contact Centralina's transportation planner, Bjorn Hansen, at (704) 688-6501 or bhansen@centralina.org.

Sincerely,

Michael Johnson
Chairman, Centralina Council of Governments

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