

Minnesota Metropolitan Planning Organization Response to AMPO Positions on 2009 Federal Surface Transportation Authorization January, 2009

AMPO Overall Position Statement

“AMPO believes that the federal surface transportation authorization should continue a strong federal role in transportation, and the federal role should be refocused on four key performance priorities that together ensure that the United States can compete effectively and thrive in the global economy. These four federal priorities are:

1. Improving International and Interstate Commerce;
2. Improving mobility and reducing congestion in the nation's metropolitan areas with a stronger and more significant role for the nation's metropolitan regions in delivering transportation programs;
3. Achieving energy independence by 2050; and,
4. Rebuilding America's transportation infrastructure.”

MN MPO Response: Minnesota MPOs support the AMPO position statement priorities outlined above. Minnesota MPOs also note the critical importance of a 5th priority area; improving highway safety.

AMPO Priority #1: Improve International and Interstate Commerce

AMPO recommends:

- Improve transportation and transparent movement through ports of entry, including seaports and border crossings.
- Improve capacity and efficiency of both rail and highway systems on specified national intermodal freight corridors.
- Address the transportation needs of border communities impacted by national freight through-movement.
- Address metropolitan congestion and bottlenecks with strategies including targeted freight improvements such as intermodal connectors, truck lanes, and truck tollways.
- Ensure that rural agricultural and resource industries have good access to markets.
- Study the feasibility of a National Truck Network that would substantially improve freight movement productivity with truck-only highways engineered with heavy-duty materials.

- Improve the nation's rail system capacity both to move goods more efficiently and to move passengers.

MN MPO Response: Minnesota MPOs support AMPO Priority #1 as stated.

AMPO Priority #2: Improve Metropolitan Mobility

AMPO recommends:

Creation of a New Metropolitan Mobility Program:

- Be focused on the largest metropolitan regions, and would be in addition to regular federal aid highway and transit allocations.
- Be allocated by formula to all large metropolitan regions, but receipt subject to state and local designation as a Metropolitan Mobility Authority (MMA). Unused allocations would be reallocated to areas that meet designation requirements.
- Be performance based, require performance standards, measurements, and reporting to reduce travel time, improve freight mobility, improve safety, reduce carbon emissions, and conserve energy.
- Be funded from federal revenue, either an augmented highway trust fund, or new sources aimed at energy conservation, and add incentives for increased local funds to include eliminating toll restrictions in metropolitan areas.

MN MPO Response: Minnesota MPOs support creation of a new Metropolitan Mobility Program and designation of Metropolitan Mobility Authorities to administer this Program. Minnesota MPOs agree with AMPO that this Program should be focused on the largest metropolitan regions. However, Minnesota MPOs also believe it is important for this Program to be made available to other MPOs that can demonstrate, through quantifiable data, increasing growth and congestion problems.

AMPO recommends:

Re-invent Metropolitan Institutions to More Effectively Improve Mobility:

- Raising the minimum population threshold for new MPOs to 100,000, while allowing existing smaller MPOs to be grandfathered in or opt out, at their own will of being subject to MPO requirements.

MN MPO Response: Minnesota MPOs support this position, but recommend removing the "opt out" language for grandfathered MPOs.

- If smaller MPOs choose to be grandfathered, they would have truly streamlined federal requirements to minimize red tape, and for areas that choose to opt out, states would be required to have a planning consultation and coordination process to ensure local involvement in state transportation planning.

MN MPO Response: Minnesota MPOs support this position, but recommend removing the “opt out” clause for existing MPOs. Minnesota MPOs believe all existing MPOs should be grandfathered as continuing MPOs under the new Bill.

- Areas above 200,000 population would gain project selection authority in cooperation with the state, over all federal transportation funds expended within the region.

MN MPO Response: Minnesota MPOs recommend that all MPOs have project selection authority over all federal transportation funds expended within MPO areas.

- In the 50 metropolitan areas with over 1 million population, regions could choose to designate themselves as a new federally defined “Metropolitan Mobility Authority.” These authorities would:
 - provide selection incentive for states and regions to invest in metropolitan mobility
 - have project selection authority for all federal funds expended within their areas
 - be eligible to receive new federal funds aimed at congestion relief and energy conservation (Metropolitan Mobility Program), and
 - be required to meet new performance-based planning standards

Designation would be by state statute, which would define the relationship with the state government including the role in state project selection, performance expectations, and other state authority, such as ability to raise regional revenue.

A new federal metropolitan mobility program would provide incentives for the creation of metropolitan mobility authorities with clearly defined and supported state mandates and authorities.

MN MPO Response: Minnesota MPOs support creation of a new Metropolitan Mobility Program and designation of Metropolitan Mobility Authorities to administer this Program. Minnesota MPOs agree with AMPO that this Program should be focused on the largest metropolitan regions. However, Minnesota MPOs also believe that it is important for this Program to be made available to other MPOs that can demonstrate, through quantifiable data, increasing growth and congestion problems.

AMPO Priority #3: Achieve Energy Independence by 2050

AMPO recommends:

National Goals for Energy Independence and Reducing Fuel Use and Emissions

- A major focus of the federal transportation authorization should be related goals of energy independence and reducing greenhouse gas emissions, both critical to global competitiveness.

MN MPO Response: Minnesota MPOs support this position.

Market Incentive for Energy Conservation

- In addition to enhanced CAFÉ standards and carbon cap and trade systems, some business leaders and economists argue that a market incentive is needed to encourage fuel conservation and emission reduction as the fleet turns over.

AMPO believes that the authorization provides an opportunity to create this market incentive that would both encourage conservation and provide an additional revenue source for basic infrastructure preservation, as well as for new programs aimed at metropolitan congestion relief, energy conservation and emissions reductions.

MN MPO Response: Minnesota MPOs support this position.

Energy Independence Fund

- Establish the Energy Independence Fund specifically to address the reduction in petroleum use of the transportation sector.
- The Fund is to be capitalized by a significant increase in federal revenue directed to transportation from the energy independence program.
- A base amount should go to fund enhanced roadway, bridge and transit preservation.
- Additional revenue coming into the fund should be for energy programs.
- Transportation programs for metropolitan congestion relief enhanced intercity passenger rail services, energy conservation, and greenhouse gas reduction aimed at reducing petroleum demand in the transportation sector by 25% by 2025.

MN MPO Response: Minnesota MPOs support this position.

AMPO Priority #4: Rebuild America's Transportation Infrastructure

AMPO recommends:

Increased Federal Funding to Ensure Base System Preservation

- Boost federal funding immediately to support rebuilding of America's highways, bridges, transit systems, and other transportation infrastructure. At a minimum, restore the purchasing power of the Highway Trust Fund.
- Establish an independent Transportation Revenue Adjustment Commission to adjust base federal revenue on an ongoing basis to meet needs.
- Take advantage of this rebuilding opportunity to (1) broadly deploy intelligent transportation system tools and strategies that improve mobility and safety on all modes; and (2) utilize research on materials and construction techniques to build smarter, quicker and longer lasting.
- Upgrade Federal interest in robust national and regional data to provide for effective transportation planning.

MN MPO Response: Minnesota MPOs support this position.