

Transportation Bill Focuses Needed Attention On Infrastructure

by Pete K. Rahn

(NAPSA)—State departments of transportation and related industries applauded congressional adoption of a 27-month transportation authorization recently. The funding program moves the nation's transportation policy in the right direction but the real question that still remains unanswered is: How will the nation pay for transportation in the future?

After almost three years of wrangling and multiple extensions, "Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act," or MAP-21, uses 10 years of savings and new revenues to pay for essentially a two-year bill. Clearly, this is not sustainable.

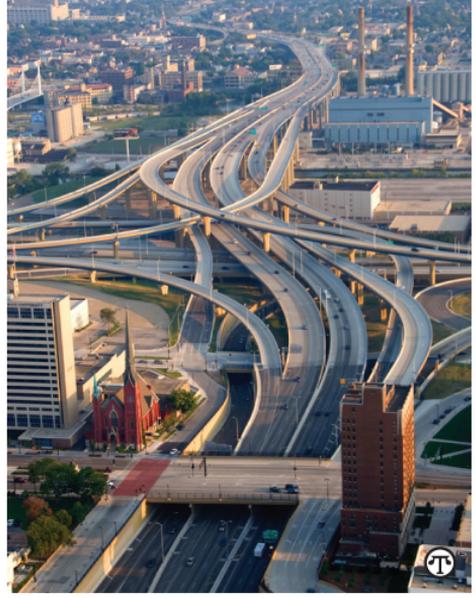
MAP-21, given the poor outlook for gas tax collections, was a remarkable bipartisan effort between the House and Senate that provides more than \$120 billion to fund the two-year transportation bill. This is a positive indication that Congress understands the importance of transportation to our economy and the daily lives of all Americans. A \$120 billion investment sounds huge. However, it is an actual decline from fiscal year 2009.

Beyond the funding levels, there are numerous positive elements to MAP-21. They include:

- States get more flexibility in administering the program.
- The bill consolidates the existing interstate maintenance, National Highway System and highway bridge programs, while increasing the percentage of federal transportation funding apportioned to these programs.

TIFIA Funding Is Increased

The bill significantly increases funding for Transportation Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act programs and allows TIFIA to fund up to 49 percent of a project. These changes will quickly con-



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vert dozens of state projects from "on-hold" to "full-steam-ahead" status. It also makes many previously thwarted public-private partnerships and tolling projects financially viable/critical components of any longer-term solution.

With all this good news, the big issue that still remains is where and how to find a sustainable revenue stream to fund a rapidly aging and increasingly congested transportation system. MAP-21 provides some breathing room. However, elected officials and the public must continue to work to increase investment into the Highway Trust Fund in preparation for the next deadline in 2014. America deserves a long-term, well-funded transportation plan that includes multiple modes of travel.

For more information about infrastructure investment, contact the state department of transportation or visit www.hntb.com.

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