Transition 2020-2021: Transportation Infrastructure

NCSL CONTACTS:
Ben Husch, Federal Affairs Counsel, ben.husch@ncsl.org
Kristen Hildreth, Senior Policy Specialist, kristen.hildreth@ncsl.org

Issue Description
The federal government plays a vital role in supporting a national transportation system that facilitates interstate commerce, addresses fairly and equally the mobility needs of all Americans, and meets national defense requirements.

At this pivotal time, we have the opportunity to put forward a new vision to guide our transportation beyond the Interstate Highway era into the 21st century and the needs and challenges that lie ahead. Your administration, together with Congress and states must look at transportation infrastructure anew, authorizing and fully funding programs that better meet current and future needs for interstate mobility.

NCSL Position
A national vision for transportation should consider the following objectives:

- Interstate commerce and freight mobility,
- Interstate movement of people,
- National defense and homeland security,
- Safety,
- Environmental and air quality preservation and improvements,
- Research and innovation.
- Economic productivity.

Though federal programs and funds should be focused on the above goals, these same programs should avoid preempting or interfering with state-specific transportation priorities.

Highways and Transit
NCSL supports the continuation and preservation of a federal-aid surface transportation program. The federal program should direct spending to national priorities while allowing for state and insular area flexibility in local and regional variations. This program should also prioritize formula-based funding which allows federal funds to be distributed through a predictable and stable manner, allowing for efficient project and multi-year program delivery wherein transportation needs and projects are
identified by states, metropolitan planning organizations and local elected officials for funding prioritization. Additionally, traffic safety programs should be expanded to incorporate emerging safety issues while respecting state sovereignty.

**Rail:** Viable passenger and freight railroad systems are essential to achieving a balanced intermodal transportation system and ensuring personal mobility, the free flow of commerce and national security. Rail must have the same financial security provided the other modes of transportation, such as highways, transit, aviation and waterways. NCSL strongly supports a dedicated source of federal funding for passenger rail service.

**Waterways and Ports:** Recognition of the substantial benefits to the nation of the U.S. system of waterways and ports by providing access to the world’s markets and the combined efforts of all levels of government and users in sharing the cost of port and waterway development and maintenance. NCSL also supports increased investment in the Inland Waterways Trust Fund to repair and modernize the existing infrastructure.

**Aviation:** Aviation is a key component of a balanced transportation system and is vitally linked to regional growth and economic development efforts and is the mutual responsibility of federal, state and local governments. Given this mutual responsibility, NCSL urges Congress and the administration to actively engage state legislatures in discussions on the development and preservation of our system of airports, avoid federal mandates, preemption of state authority, and provide states maximum flexibility.

**Transportation Technology:** Transportation modes are on the cusp of a technological transformation with the potential to both revolutionize personal mobility and provide immeasurable safety benefits. Whether autonomous vehicles or unmanned aerial systems (drones), federal, state and local governments must work together to ensure a successful deployment of these and other transportation technologies. NCSL looks forward to working with your administration and Congress to clearly define state and federal roles as well as avoid unnecessary federal preemption.