1 | Anticipate last-minute changes.
Schedules are very fluid, so Senators, Representatives, and their staff are often pulled away for last-minute, unplanned activities. As such, your meeting could be delayed or you may meet with a different person than expected. Do not take any last-minute meeting changes personally, and make sure you are always gracious and flexible. In addition, do not be offended if staff frequently look at their cellphones during a meeting. Staff are extremely busy but are able to multi-task and listen to you while checking their phones for any important messages.

2 | Meeting with staff is just as valuable as meeting with Members.
They serve as the subject matter experts and they can provide both technical and political perspectives to your issue area.

3 | Be brief and clear.
Cover no more than a few topics. Make sure to include a personal story or real-life illustration to maximize persuasiveness. Personal stories are more easily remembered than statistics. Stay focused on the message. Relate national issues to how the state or local economy will be affected. If meeting as a group, ensure that conversation is not dominated by just one person. Lawmakers and staffers will ask direct questions; give them direct answers and tell them what you think. If asked a question to which you do not know the answer, the best tactic is to say “I don’t know” with a promise to follow up later with the answer.
4 | Bring a short set of materials with you to leave behind at the end of your meeting.
Do not give the materials to the Member/staffer until the close of the meeting to minimize distraction. Early in the meeting indicate that you have materials to leave behind. Be sure you to follow through on any promises of additional information.

5 | Establish a clear understanding.
Summarize your requests and any responses the Senator/Representative/staffer has provided to ensure that you are clear on where they stand on the issues. Express appreciation for their time, interest, and courtesy, and indicate that you’re looking forward to following up with the office.

6 | Close the meeting successfully.
Make sure you give your contact information. Get a business card from the Member of Congress/staffer so that you know how to reach him/her.

7 | Share your experience in the AASHTO Washington Briefing after-action session.
Other AASHTO members and staff want to hear about your efforts and successes! This will allow us to compare notes and determine how effectively our message was received.

8 | Follow up with a thank you note or email.
Your prompt follow-up note should express appreciation for the time and consideration extended to you during your meeting. Repeat your request(s) and ask for a response from the office. Follow up with answers or information the office requested of you.

9 | Keep in touch with the Member of Congress and his/her staffer.
Continue to build on the relationships you establish with the staff when you return home. Maintain contact by periodically sending updates on your work or other newsworthy items as appropriate.