Proposed Policy Resolution for the AASHTO Transportation Policy Forum

Title: Increasing the Flexibility of the Federal-Aid Transportation Program to Mitigate the Impacts of Sea-Level Rise and Extreme Weather Events

WHEREAS, Changes in sea-levels and the increased frequency and severity of extreme weather events have adversely impacted every region of the United States; and

WHEREAS, Many states and cities are implementing bold initiatives to improve transportation infrastructure resiliency; and

WHEREAS, Even without considering the impacts of climate change, the American Society of Civil Engineers estimates that failure to make necessary investments in infrastructure will cost the United States 2.5 million jobs and $4 trillion in Gross Domestic Product between the period of 2016 through 2025; and

WHEREAS, According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, in 2017, there were 16 weather and climate disaster events across the United States totaling $306 billion in cumulative loses; and

WHEREAS, Developing climate resilient infrastructure will assist to ensure the economic security of the United States; and now therefore be it

RESOLVED, That Congress is urged to amend existing federal-aid highway programs to provide states the flexibility to address resilience; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That Congress should amend the National Highway Performance Program (23 USC 119) to add eligibility for the construction, reconstruction, restoration, rehabilitation, and preservation of a Federal-aid highway or bridge not on the National Highway System provided the activity supports measures to increase the resiliency of critical transportation infrastructure from the impacts of sea-level rise and extreme weather events; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That Congress should amend the National Highway Performance Program (23 USC 119) to strike the performance penalties that adversely impact measures to increase the resiliency of federal-aid eligible highway or bridge infrastructure either on or off the National Highway System; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That Congress should amend the Emergency Relief Program (23 USC 125) to make damages caused by sea-level rise eligible for Emergency Relief program funding and add the following specific eligibilities:

(i) raising roadway grades
(ii) relocating roadways to higher ground or away from slide prone areas or away from natural threats
(iii) stabilizing slide areas
(iv) stabilizing slopes
(v) installing riprap
(vi) lengthening or raising bridges to increase waterway openings
(vii) increase channel cross-section and maintain channel conveyance toward stream equilibrium (i.e. vertical channel stability)
(viii) maximize adjacent floodplain function with benching, berm removal, and/or increases in channel bed elevation
(ix) increasing the size and number of drainage structures
(x) replacing culverts with bridges and replacing bridges with bridges with increased flow capacity
(xi) installing seismic retrofits on bridges
(xii) adding scour protection at bridges
(xiii) adding spur dikes
(xiv) installing air convection embankments, thermosiphons, or insulation to delay or prevent thawing of permafrost
(xv) adaptive engineering
(xvi) material modifications
(xvii) other as approved by the Secretary; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That Congress should amend the Emergency Relief Program (23 USC 125) to remove the prohibition of Emergency Relief program funding for damaged facilities on an approved Transportation Improvement Program; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That Congress should, at the discretion of the state, allow the federal share payable (23 USC 120) for any project for the construction, reconstruction, restoration, rehabilitation, and preservation of a Federal-aid highway or bridge to increase the resiliency of transportation infrastructure from the impacts of sea-level rise and extreme weather events, to be up to 100 percent of the total project cost.