

# 2019–2020 Presidential Emphasis Areas

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**O**ur challenge as state departments of transportation is to help develop a sense of purpose and urgency within the general public and Congress about the transportation needs of our country. Ultimately, transportation is the key enabler of a higher purpose: to the safest system, highest possible quality of life, and most robust economic opportunities for every American. State departments of transportation represent the finest example of organizations and people who act in the public interest and we must convey our knowledge of transportation needs through that common lens of public purpose.

The national transportation system is facing a long list of challenges, from increasing demand, to the rise of extreme weather, to the steady and stealthy impact of time, and the time value of money on an aging infrastructure. We can see evidence of these challenges in rising congestion—not only in our urban areas, but also our small and mid-sized cities. We can see it in our flood damaged bridges and roads. We can see it in how more than 47,000 of the nation's bridges are in poor condition.

Yet, the federal gas tax remains at just 18.4 cents a gallon, last adjusted in 1993. Somehow, investing in transportation infrastructure—which for so long garnered strong, bipartisan support—has become a dream for another day. The Highway Trust Fund is nearing insolvency again unless Congress increases revenue or additional funds are transferred from the General Fund.

The FAST Act expires in September 2020. As Congress considers new authorization, we must focus on the urgent need for funding to shore up the Highway Trust Fund. We need to make clear the public benefit of federal surface transportation investment—and its impact on the safety, mobility, health, and economic well-being of all Americans.





# Presidential Priorities and Emphasis Areas for Missouri Director Patrick McKenna

1. *Renewing a focus on a national public health crisis. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration estimates that 36,700 people died on America's roads in 2018. Despite tremendous advances in technology and millions invested in education, the annual loss of life on our nation's roads is staggering.*

- Lead a national conversation about the public's role in safe conduct on the nation's transportation network. Given that 94 percent of serious injuries and fatalities on the system are caused by human behavior, we must realize that we cannot wait for technology to account for distraction, speed and impaired use of this system. We need a national call to buckle your safety belts and put your cell phone down #BUPD.
- Continue AASHTO's role in the Toward Zero Deaths and other national safety coalitions, with the goal of raising public awareness of the national health crisis.
- Continue to advocate for advances in connected and automated vehicle technology, and the deployment of life-saving technologies and strategies leveraging the 5.9 GHz band.
- Facilitate a conversation with state DOTs and local communities to consider ways to deploy innovative infrastructure designs and technologies to more safely accommodate pedestrians, cyclists and emerging mobility options such as scooters and electric bicycles.







2. *Surface transportation reauthorization in a Presidential election year is a tall task, but one that AASHTO and its members must fully embrace. State DOTs depend on the funding stability provided by multiyear federal transportation programs. The federal-state partnership, which has long been the foundation in our nation’s approach to a national transportation system, is absolutely crucial to meet states’ capital investment programs, which take multiple years to plan and construct.*

A long-term transportation bill is needed now, so that there is no authorization gap upon FAST Act expiration in September 2020. Short-term extensions cause unnecessary program disruptions and delay safety and mobility benefits to states and communities.

AASHTO, on behalf of its member departments of transportation, will make surface transportation reauthorization a primary focus through a variety of actions.

- Share AASHTO’s reauthorization principles and priorities with state DOT committee volunteers. Regularly engage our member DOTs with updates on congressional activities and tips and suggestions on how to educate congressional members and their staffs about the need for transportation investment in their home districts.
- Launch a national campaign focused on “transportation is personal” that will highlight the benefits of transportation investment. Work with state DOTs to make clear to the general public the critical role transportation plays in their personal economic vitality and overall quality of life.





