

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ON THE AASHTO \$37B BACKSTOP

July 24, 2020

- **How does the AASHTO request differ from the NGA request? Can't Governors just use any direct aid they get to help state DOTs?**
 - The AASHTO request recognizes the tremendous needs faced by governors for a wide range of state government programs supported by each state's general fund—in addition to meeting unanticipated costs related to COVID-19 mitigation. With that said, the AASHTO backstop specifically addresses immediate transportation and infrastructure needs faced by state DOTs supported by dedicated state-level user fees on motor fuels and vehicles outside of the general fund. The backstop funds allocated specifically for transportation purposes will enable our national system to remain safe and operational to support the movement of emergency personnel and supplies, in addition to making sure important construction work can continue.
- **How does the AASHTO request fit into the stimulus/economic recovery debate?**
 - This is separate and apart from the stimulus debate. The AASHTO backstop is to make sure the current transportation work and activities can be stabilized along the pre-COVID levels without letting the bottom fall out. This backstop is not intended to induce additional activities above and beyond the baseline level; rather, it is needed to prevent cancellations and delays of existing projects as well as massive job losses both in the state DOT workforce and the private sector.
- **How does the AASHTO request impact the ability to complete the reauthorization process this year - and how does it impact the ability to reauthorize the programs at a higher level?**
 - AASHTO is fully behind a timely and robust reauthorization of surface transportation programs on October 1, as we spent the last two years developing a [comprehensive set of policy recommendations](#). But in order to get to standalone reauthorization or as part of the economic recovery package, state DOTs must receive the federal backstop to stabilize its operations in the immediate weeks and months ahead. Without the backstop, state DOTs' core capabilities will deteriorate and not allow them to be in a position to implement the needed reauthorization when the opportunity arises.
- **How would USDOT oversee the spending on "operations" or "maintenance" activities?**
 - The backstop funds for operations and maintenance eligibilities can be treated similarly to construction activities overseen under the current Federal-aid Highway Program. Such activities will be conducted on a reimbursable basis utilizing the existing accounting structure utilized by the Federal Highway Administration.
- **Why do you need money if we make the Federal share 100%? Can't you use the "savings" from the Federal share increase to pay for your operations and maintenance activities?**
 - Increasing the federal share to 100 percent in the current FAST Act programs is nowhere enough by itself. While this flexibility measure will provide a significant benefit, the depth of the current crisis is much too deep for states to simply address by moving around state money that is seeing a substantial hit in revenue as we speak.
- **We can't just keep giving money to states and municipalities with no accountability.**
 - The backstop funds for transportation will leverage the existing formula-based federal highway funding framework. This means funds will be used for specific functions ranging among construction, operations, maintenance, and administrative necessities—all to ensure our national system remains safe and operational to support the movement of emergency personnel and supplies, and to support continuation of important construction work.