

## AASHTO Transportation Policy Forum

Victoria Sheehan, Chair | Vice President, AASHTO | Commissioner, New Hampshire Department of Transportation  
Lynn Zanto, Vice Chair | Transportation Planning Division Administrator, Montana Department of Transportation  
Thursday, November 12, 2020 | 1:00 PM - 3:00 PM EST  
2020 AASHTO Virtual Annual Meeting | Washington, DC

### Meeting Minutes

1. The Transportation Policy Forum (TPF) was called to order at 1:02 PM by Chairwoman Victoria Sheehan, New Hampshire.
2. Chairwoman Sheehan began the meeting by thanking the TPF for their presence. She said that today's meeting will feature deep discussions on surface transportation reauthorization efforts.
3. Roll Call was taken by Rebecca Anger, AASHTO Program Specialist for Policy, and the following states were present: Alabama\*, Alaska, Arizona, California, Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Idaho, Illinois\*, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky\*, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, North Carolina, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Vermont, Virginia\*, Washington State, West Virginia, Wisconsin, and Wyoming.
4. Chairwoman Sheehan asked for approval of the minutes from the TPF meeting in Washington, DC on February 25, 2020. Chairwoman Sheehan moved to approve the minutes. The meeting minutes were approved.
5. Chairwoman Sheehan introduced the discussion on the AASHTO Washington Update on Federal Policy.

Jim Tymon, AASHTO Executive Director, spoke to Congressional developments related to 2020 election results, specifying that AASHTO does not foresee substantial changes to House leadership but does acknowledge continued uncertainty in Senate leadership. Mr. Tymon also spoke to the legislative accomplishments of passing the FAST Act one-year extension as well as the \$13.6 billion infusion into the Highway Trust Fund. He then reiterated AASHTO's interest in working with Congress on reauthorization following Congress' lame duck session. He called the TPF to work with Congress on emerging and salient infrastructure issues concerning climate change and technological advancement. Mr. Tymon noted the importance of obtaining government funding this month, with particular attention for Senate appropriations bills. He concluded by talking on AASHTO's ongoing efforts to obtain additional Covid-19 relief funding for state DOTs, emphasizing AASHTO's goal of separate state DOT assistance.

John Porcari, former USDOT Deputy Secretary and former Maryland DOT Secretary, spoke on next steps for transportation policy, given the 2020 election results. He emphasized the importance of local-level policy perspective in building the federally-aggregated national transportation system. He highlighted maritime and rail as a system which could benefit greatly from concentrated attention from direct local relationships through grant programs. He noted two important next steps: rebuilding public confidence in the transportation system post-Covid; and securing project funding that promotes

transformative state and local programs. Mr. Porcari encouraged State participants to view infrastructure as a means to the end of improving quality of life. He emphasized compiling a mix of low and high priority projects to best progress infrastructure goals by ensuring short-term recovery while promoting long-term transformative benefits. Mr. Porcari also noted that States can expect, under Biden leadership, to see emphasis placed on continued process improvements, environmental outcomes, resiliency and safety, innovation and technology, economic equity, and public transit. Mr. Porcari made specific examples of the Vision Zero goal and intercity passenger rail. He then discussed the importance of revisiting and redesigning the right-of-way process to build bipartisan and local support for infrastructure initiatives. He emphasized needing a shift from an ownership to stewardship right-of-way, calling on rural broadband and high voltage DC transmission as examples. He supported AASHTO as a leader to build a bipartisan movement for local and state driven discussion of local decision making processes in transportation.

Chairwoman Sheehan moderated questioned. Mr. Tymon asked after the opportunity for, or desire of, Congress to work jointly to advance transportation policy in the upcoming months. Mr. Porcari responded that the Biden administration is a willing proponent of advancing transportation infrastructure, and also calls on the need for flexibility when building bipartisan support and the need to address rural alongside urban development. Mr. Tymon responded that state DOTs have great opportunities to take steps forward, for instance with better environmental results for communities or intercity passenger rail. Mr. Porcari reiterated the importance of intercity passenger rail among city pairs in the country. Mr. Tymon responded on the issues of equity, that state DOTs and AASHTO are prepared to bring such issues to the forefront moving forward. Mr. Porcari responded that the most important infrastructure projects serve multiple community needs. Giles Giovinazzi, California, commented on the importance of using a stewardship model for right-of-way, referencing California's work to promote zero-emission vehicle recharging and hoped that both AASHTO and the new administration may support such efforts as well. He then commented that loosening restrictions around commercialization of food trucks addressed emergency resilience in the supply chain, and hoped the new administration would take a fresh look at such ventures. He then asked whether Mr. Porcari saw project lists as part of a Biden Administration infrastructure project. Mr. Porcari responded that larger lists and working on the front end of the process to prepare projects is important preparation for launching projects in the future, as well as important for fast responses in the case of emergency events. Chairwoman Sheehan shared a second question from California, asking how reauthorization should address safety issues. Mr. Porcari responded that research program should be operationalized, vehicle design features should be updated, facility design should be improved on site-specific bases in preparation for when funding becomes available. Ed Hassinger, Missouri, asked how unfunded project lists should or will be prioritized. Mr. Porcari responded that it is crucial to augment base allocation and formula programs to prepare projects in existing priority lists.

6. Chairwoman Sheehan then introduced the discussion on Senate priorities for surface transportation.

Robert A. Hickman, Transportation Counsel, spoke on Senate priorities for surface reauthorization. He addressed the congressional division in short- and long-term planning, particularly with regards to defining priorities given Covid. He emphasized the challenges in balancing national Covid relief needs with transportation funding requests. He noted the long running disagreement in Congress on Covid and other legislative deals between the House and Senate. Mr. Hickman hopes to see action on these issues in the upcoming weeks, but also envisions the new administration will make Covid relief an ongoing priority. He affirmed Congressional interest in passing major infrastructure legislation, even when slowed by partisan debate, noting the passing of the Moving America Forward Act and America's Transportation Infrastructure Act. He concluded by projecting that an opportunity will arise to advance infrastructure markedly with the new administration which has stated its own interest in advancing infrastructure. Chairwoman Sheehan asked whether Mr. Hickman had any

recommendations for State preparations for the next session. Mr. Hickman responded that, with regard to Covid needs, revisiting requests to assess current needs for the new year is important.

7. Chairwoman Sheehan opened the discussion of key issues on policy outlook and Covid relief with the Forum using interactive polling exercises. Chairwoman Sheehan summarized that AASHTO requested a \$37 billion package from Congress to ensure that state DOTs could meet funding needs across the topics of capital, preservation, maintenance, operational, and administration needs. She iterated that the interactive exercise was to evaluate most pressing needs for federal support in order to inform AASHTO actions with Congress in the coming month. Chairwoman Sheehan discussed New Hampshire's challenges regarding transportation funding given the uncertainty of state revenues and affirmed New Hampshire's desire for Congressional action on infrastructure funding.

Matt Hardy, AASHTO Program Director for Planning and Performance Management, introduced the polling exercise. Joungh Lee, AASHTO Director of Policy and Government Relations, managed the polling results while providing insight into AASHTO stances. When asked "What is your state's projected transportation-related revenue loss for FY 2021 compared to pre-pandemic estimates?" participants most commonly responded on three responses ranging from a decline between zero and 20 percent. When asked "Where is your state DOT in terms of urgency for backstop?" in a 1 to 10 rank, participant responses averaged at 7. When asked "Where do you see the most need for this backstop assistance?" participants ranked the following: 1. System preservation needs, 2. Capital needs, 3. Maintenance needs, 4. Operational needs, 5. Administration needs. Last, when asked "Using 100 points, which of the following features in the AASHTO backstop request do you value the most?" participants ranked the following: 1. \$37 billion in federal funding, 2. Fully flexible federal funding eligibilities, 3. 100% State DOT Backstop, 4. 100% FY 2021 FAST Act extension, 5. Backstop funds may be used as non-fed match, 6. Backstop funding is available until expended. Pamela Cotter, Rhode Island, commented that Rhode Island values an infusion of cash to match the state's aggressive ten-year plan focused on state of good repair projects and asked for state flexibility to address Rhode Island's lack of 2021 budget.

8. Chairwoman Sheehan then introduced discussion on developments of the 2021 AASHTO Legislative Action Agenda with the Forum using interactive polling exercises. Chairwoman Sheehan reiterated AASHTO's desire to build on past core policy principles, and refresh the core policy principles document around pertinent emerging policy issues.

Mr. Lee led the discussion with an assessment of AASHTO's existing legislative action agenda priorities. Mr. Lee noted that AASHTO's vision statement for reauthorization acknowledges the importance of using infrastructure projects to enable quality of life and economic improvements. Mr. Lee walked through the core policy principles that served as the 2020 Legislative Action Agenda, while reiterating the importance of maintaining a balanced mix of priorities when addressing future project and legislative actions. Mr. Lee discussed the continued need to pass a long term reauthorization bill and refine policy continuity with regards to asset management, as well as the need to consider infrastructure nationally, both urban and rural. Mr. Lee followed with the need for a long-term sustainable revenue solution for the Highway Trust Fund, which AASHTO has had strong conversations on with Congress. Mr. Lee then spoke on federal formula dollars and his expectation for continued conversations on earmarks in Congress. Mr. Lee recognized the question of local funding and finding the flexibility to prioritize important projects. Mr. Lee continued with speaking to the need to increase flexibility to reduce project burden and improve project deliverability, with specific attention to resiliency and equity. Mr. Lee concluded with the need to support state DOT ability to harness innovative technology, recognizing the need for balanced responsibility of issues and proper oversight when aligning legislation with implementation.

When asked for input on other subjects to be considered in AASHTO's Legislative Action Agenda moving forward, participants most commonly responded with "stable long-term funding," "resiliency," and "equity." Mr. Lee continued the discussion on topics like "flexibility" and "5G" by noting that the Safety Band reallocation formal vote was upcoming, a topic which AASHTO has been actively vocal on. Marc Williams, Texas, commented on the need to preserve core programs and the flexibility therein, rather than instituting new programs; to articulate the challenges associated with local funding; and the importance of right-of-way as an asset. Stu Anderson, Iowa, agreed with Texas and commented on the value of consistent messaging and the need to refresh talking points on the connection between core principles and emerging issues. Lynn Zanto, Montana, agreed with the previous two speakers and commented that a key principle is flexibility to allow states to frame reauthorization to local needs. Mr. Lee affirmed that state DOTs are best situated to work with Congress on legislature development as leading practitioners in transportation infrastructure.

9. The TPF adjourned for the day at 2:58 PM.