

March 18, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi, Speaker, United States House of Representatives
The Honorable Mitch McConnell, Majority Leader, United States Senate

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy, Republican Leader, United States House of Representatives
The Honorable Charles E. Schumer, Democratic Leader, United States Senate

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Leader McConnell, Leader McCarthy, and Leader Schumer:

As the organization representing all 50 state departments of transportation (state DOTs), the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico, the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) urges Congress for an immediate and temporary nationwide waiver of federal truck weight restrictions, which will provide states with maximum flexibility and discretion to manage interstate transportation of emergency supplies in combating coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19). In addition, we request \$16.7 billion in supplemental federal transportation funding to backstop state revenue shortfalls expected due to COVID-19.

Nationwide Waiver of Truck Weight Restrictions to Enable Delivery of Emergency Supplies

AASHTO requests Congress to authorize the Secretary of Transportation to grant a temporary nationwide waiver of the federally-mandated maximum vehicle weights for the National System of Interstate and Defense Highways for the delivery of emergency relief supplies as defined by the Federal Highway Administration in its implementation of Section 1511 in the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act. By allowing state DOTs to establish temporary maximum weights under this waiver that accounts for bridge capacities on their highway system, this action will greatly aid in timely interstate transportation of urgently needed medical supply and essential goods such as food and water to address the COVID-19 outbreaks. We ask for this waiver to remain in effect until President Trump's "Proclamation on Declaring a National Emergency Concerning the Novel Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) Outbreak" issued on March 13, 2020, is lifted.

Backstopping Estimated Reductions in State Highway Revenues

In the near term, all modes of transportation—air, highway, transit, rail, and water—are anticipated to face steep declines in user fee and tax revenues due to COVID-19. These revenues are critical for states to maintain the transportation systems that enable the movement of critical goods and personnel to meet the needs of all Americans during this time of crisis. The National Association of State Budget Officers estimated that states collected \$111 billion in highway-related revenues including motor fuel taxes in FY 2019. Our initial projection estimates up to a ten percent decline in highway-related revenues for FY 2020 and FY 2021. Therefore we request \$16.7 billion in federal funding support to state DOTs through the Federal-aid Highway formula program at 100 percent federal share. This additional funding will allow states to continue to address their critical transportation needs while also allowing state resources to be directed to the most immediate public health needs to minimize the impact of COVID-19.

Ensuring Operational Continuity and Investment in America’s State-supported Passenger Rail Network

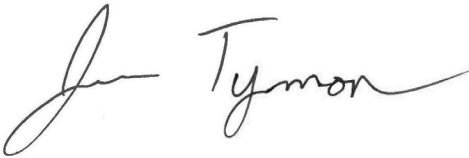
Twenty-one public agencies in 18 states across the United States are responsible for 29 passenger rail routes serviced by Amtrak. States, an entity designated by a state, and Amtrak should be provided federal funding support to offset a variety of costs associated with the loss of revenue and ridership and the increased costs associated with limiting operations and the protection of passenger rail workforce and customers. AASHTO supports Amtrak’s emergency request for \$978 million, which includes \$200 million to help offset losses on state-supported routes.

Enabling Long-term Economic Recovery by Reducing Highway and Transit Investment Backlog

Despite substantial and recurring funding challenges facing transportation, the investment backlog for transportation infrastructure continues to increase—reaching \$786 billion for highways and bridges and \$116 billion for transit according to the United States Department of Transportation. We recognize that the shock to our nation’s economic outlook due to COVID-19 is serious and will require substantial time and effort for recovery to degrees even greater than what was experienced during the Great Recession. Increased investment in transportation infrastructure has time and again proven to provide the optimal boost to the economy during a major crisis—and these benefits go well beyond short-term construction jobs maintained and supported. As you consider additional federal responses to expedite economic recovery, we urge Congress to direct robust resources to transportation, which will enable businesses to manage inventories and move goods more cheaply, access a variety of suppliers and markets for their products, and get employees reliably to work. Ultimately, by doubling down on transportation investment, American families and businesses will be able to get back on their feet much sooner than in the absence of action to shore up our capital needs in transportation.

The nation’s state DOTs stand ready to provide every assistance possible to federal and local partners during this unprecedented emergency to support our residents and businesses. If you have any questions, please contact Joung Lee, AASHTO’s Director of Policy and Government Relations at 202-624-5818 or jlee@aaashto.org.

Sincerely,



Jim Tymon
Executive Director
American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials

cc:

The Honorable Richard Shelby, Chair, Senate Appropriations Committee
The Honorable Patrick J. Leahy, Ranking Member, Senate Appropriations Committee
The Honorable Susan Collins, Chair, Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies
The Honorable Jack Reed, Ranking Member, Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies
The Honorable Michael Crapo, Chair, Senate Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs Committee
The Honorable Sherrod Brown, Ranking Member, Senate Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs Committee
The Honorable John Barrasso, Chair, Senate Environment and Public Works Committee
The Honorable Thomas R. Carper, Ranking Member, Senate Environment and Public Works Committee
The Honorable Roger Wicker, Chair, Senate Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee
The Honorable Maria Cantwell, Ranking Member, Senate Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee
The Honorable Chuck Grassley, Chair, Senate Committee on Finance
The Honorable Ron Wyden, Ranking Member, Senate Committee on Finance
The Honorable Nita M. Lowey, Chair, House Appropriations Committee
The Honorable Kay Granger, Ranking Member, House Appropriations Committee
The Honorable David E. Price, Chair, House Appropriations Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies
The Honorable Mario Diaz-Balart, Ranking Member, House Appropriations Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies
The Honorable Peter A. DeFazio, Chair, House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee
The Honorable Sam Graves, Ranking Member, House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee
The Honorable Eleanor Holmes Norton, Chair, House Transportation and Infrastructure Subcommittee on Highways and Transit
The Honorable Rodney Davis, Ranking Member, House Transportation and Infrastructure Subcommittee on Highways and Transit
The Honorable Richard Neal, Chair, House Ways and Means Committee
The Honorable Kevin Brady, Ranking Member, House Ways and Means Committee