



# Recommendations on Federal Transportation Authorizing Law

## OVERALL PRINCIPLES

Increased federal investment for public transportation and highway programs should be authorized in a way that considers the needs and benefits of balanced investments in all transportation modes.

**CTAI recommends the federal transportation authorizing law should:**

1. Provide predictable funding for six years but not less than four years;
2. Provide a comprehensive financial approach that increases funding to meet the growing demand on the transportation network;
3. Create an incentive for state and local governments to increase dedicated funding for transportation;
4. Continue to make flexible funding programs available to state and local governments for transportation projects;
5. Preserve and ensure the consideration of public transportation alternatives within a multi-modal regional and statewide planning process; and,
6. Promote policies to ensure coordination of resources and services between human service agencies and transportation agencies.

## HIGHWAY PROGRAM RECOMMENDATIONS

### Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) Program

Through policy guidance, US DOT has established a five-year time period in which transit agencies may use three years' worth of CMAQ funds for operating assistance. **CTAI recommends:**

- Allowing public transportation projects that meet the eligibility standard of the CMAQ program to continue to use CMAQ funds without a time period constraint.

### Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP)

MAP-21 combined the Transportation Enhancements, Safe Routes to School, and the Recreational Trails Programs into the Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP). The TAP funds have supplied many local communities in Idaho with grants for a variety of transportation related projects, especially walking and biking, that otherwise would not have been funded. **CTAI recommends:**

- Continuing and expanding the Transportation Alternatives Program; and,
- Removing the provision that State DOTs can transfer half of the Transportation Alternative Program funds to other non-transportation alternative projects.

The Community Transportation Association of Idaho is a membership organization that advocates for and empowers Idahoans to develop transportation systems they need for economic vitality, quality of life, and healthy communities. CTAI is guided by the vision that transportation options are a core element of the transportation systems that promote vibrant, healthy, and economically sustainable communities in Idaho.

# PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION PROGRAM RECOMMENDATIONS

## Planning Programs

As a practical matter, CTAI believes in the performance-based planning. However, much work is still needed to fully understand what performance-based planning really means and what impacts it may have on programming public transportation services. **CTAI recommends:**

- Continuing to support locally-driven planning and programming decisions; and,
- Ensuring State DOTs coordinate plans, programs, and activities with the planning activities carried out by other state agencies that use or provide transportation services.

## Urbanized Formula Programs

As the largest source of federal transit funding under MAP-21, **CTAI recommends:**

- Preserving the authority for grant recipients in small urbanized areas with population under 200,000 to utilize up to 100% of Section 5307 as operating expenses;
- Preserving current law that authorizes preventive maintenance as a capital expenditure;
- Maintaining Job Access and Reverse Commute (JARC) projects as an eligible activity under Section 5307; and,
- Allowing farebox revenues to be used as local match.

## Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities Program

Demand for public transportation services from veterans, seniors, and the disabled population continues to grow throughout all corners of Idaho. **CTAI recommends:**

- Revising the current apportionment ratio such that fiscal year funding is distributed as follows:
  - 40% apportioned to large urbanized areas
  - 20% apportioned to states for distribution to small urbanized areas
  - 20% apportioned to states for distribution to rural areas
  - 20% apportioned to states for distribution throughout the state

## Rural Formula Programs

Even as funding levels for the Rural Area Formula grant program were increased under MAP-21, great need persists for systems operating in non-urbanized communities. **CTAI recommends:**

- Continuing the land-mass adjusters in the Section 5311 allocation formula;
- Developing rural-centric performance measures in cooperation with rural transit operators;
- Ensuring safety regulations utilize existing record-keeping, data collection, and reporting requirements; and,
- Allowing farebox revenues to be used as local match.

## Bus and Bus Facilities Program

Under MAP-21, the Bus and Bus Facilities Program was reduced by 57% and funds were transferred to other formula accounts. In addition, a program that had been entirely discretionary/competitive was restructured to be completely formula-based. The formula nature of the new program has not met the capital needs of many transit agencies for large and infrequent capital investments such as major bus procurement and facility improvements. **CTAI recommends:**

- Restoring the funding level to the pre MAP-21 level by year two of the six-year authorization; and,
- Revising the program structure to provide 50% of the funds to be distributed by formula and 50% of the funds be distributed through a competitive, discretionary program with the award criteria being developed in collaboration with the industry.