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Resolution # T-2015-01

Sponsor: Chairman John Wisniewski

Resolution in Support of Long Term Federal Surface Transportation Policy

Whereas, the Council of State Governments - Eastern Regional Conference (CSG-ERC) recognizes that transportation infrastructure is vital to economic development, job creation; mobility, and quality of life; and

Whereas, the safe and efficient transport of people, goods and services depends on a safe, reliable, and environmentally sound surface transportation system; and

Whereas, the need for long term enhanced investment in the infrastructure is clearly demonstrated by the ever increasing number of deficient roads and bridges found across the nation's aging system; and

Whereas, congestion continues to build on our nation's highways, bridges, railways and airways negatively impacting the economy and the environment; and

Whereas, the Highway Trust Fund (HTF) can no longer fully sustain the vast needs of the system, and, continues to be regularly threatened with insolvency without a long-term, sustainable funding stream; and

Whereas, transit systems, both rural and urban, are unique assets of the region's transportation system; and

Whereas, travel and tourism, especially with regard to Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands, are critical components of the region's economy; and

Whereas, the rail system (passenger and freight) is an integral part of the region and the nation's transportation system, as well as a key to economic vitality, and mobility, in the region; the nation; and beyond our borders; and

Whereas, recent events have demonstrated the ever growing need to focus on rail safety, in particular the transport of energy materials; and

Whereas, states across the country are endeavoring to find alternate solutions for supplementing federal investment, such as public-private partnerships; indexing the gas tax against inflation; tolling; and mileage based user fees; and

Whereas, transportation remains a federal-state partnership; and the current federal surface transportation (highways, bridges, transit and rail) policies are in need of enactment of long term authorizations; and

Whereas, extreme weather events in the Northeast and around the Nation in recent years have painfully demonstrated how fragile the infrastructure is, and how much it is depended upon; and

Whereas, emerging transportation technologies including autonomous, self-driving vehicles and the connected vehicle environment requires a robust, underlying technological platform that can provide consistent, interoperable, and safe operations for all users;

Therefore Be It Resolved that the Executive Committee of the Council of State Governments Eastern Regional Conference fully supports the enactment of long term federal surface transportation legislation that will establish policies in support of investments to maintain and improve the infrastructure; increase system mobility, reliability, and safety, and will enhance the environment; while also improving our nation's ability to compete in the global market;

Be It Further Resolved that the Executive Committee of the Council of State Governments Eastern Regional Conference supports:

1. Strong federal investment in mega-projects that are in the state, provincial, regional, and national interest;
2. Increased investment in rural and urban transit systems – especially those that stress transit oriented development;
3. Increased investment in the planning, design, construction of facilities, and high-speed rail, where appropriate, that will enhance intercity passenger rail service across the nation and between the US and Canada;
4. Investment in programs and projects that will link intercity passenger rail to other modes of transportation in a seamless, efficient manner;
5. National freight transportation policies that fully acknowledge the roles and responsibilities of the motor carrier; and emphasize safety and mobility; including safer and more efficient transport of hazardous materials across state, national and international borders;
6. A priority federal focus and increased investment in the region's aging bridges.
7. Facilitating states and groups of states as they develop alternative sources of funding/financing transportation; such as public-private partnerships and mileage based user fees, where appropriate;
8. Using lessons learned in tolling interoperability, investing in research, deployment and operation of user friendly fare collection systems that will enhance multi-jurisdiction travel;
9. Significant annual federal investment in surface transportation border infrastructure.
10. An emphasis on extreme weather retrofitting of existing facilities in highway, bridge, transit, port and rail programs.
11. A focus on the importance of investing in the region's infrastructure as it pertains to travel and tourism, within the continental U.S and Canada and especially as related to the economic well-being of Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands.

12. Increased investment in new technologies that support the improved efficiency and safety of our existing and future transportation infrastructure network.

And Be It Further Resolved, that copies of this resolution be sent to Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, Senate Minority Leader Harry Reid, Speaker of the House of Representatives John A. Boehner, Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi, the Governors and the Premiers, Speakers and Senate Presidents of the Legislative Assemblies of the Northeastern States and Eastern Canadian Provinces.