

Highway Trust Fund Debate, by Denny Lancaster 290203

The short fall in our highway trust fund was addressed with stop gap funding in 2008 and has a provision for further stop gap funding in the current stimulus plan before congress.

Certainly everyone knows that when the system was envisioned then built in the 1950's the debate on construction centered on funding. The federal gas tax which has remained "relatively" unchanged was the basis for establishing a trust fund, which went primarily for new construction, not repair or maintenance. So the incentive was to build more roads or loose the federal matching funds of 80/20.

Secondly the allocation of trust funds is based upon miles common carriers travel within specific states along with vehicular traffic within a state or intra state travel and gas or diesel purchases within individual states.

Now the "rubs" which include a sharp decline in vehicular traffic and an increase in common carrier traffic. The latter being international and intra state in nature, while the former primarily in state like going to work, school and grocery shopping.

A second "rub" is vehicular traffic creating a disproportionate "wear and tear" on the local portions of interstate highways compared to common carriers assuming the mid range of load limits (86,000 pounds).

The presumption that any particular administration is responsible for crumbling roads and bridges, highway trust funds is just short sighted. Rather we should be considering the cost of highway construction per mile, which varies significantly state by state. Also the quality of construction which varies. Despite the fact of states like Mississippi which are willing to fund experimental road construction 100%, provide prototypes for advanced road engineering and even when construction cost is indexed to the "highest federal cost" are significantly lower.

The problems of our highway trust fund, interstate highway system, which are federal problems, impacting states, is a matter of stopping "politics as usual." Rethinking the unintended consequences of just throwing more money down a rat hole and building smarter, cheaper and forcing the highly populated states which rely on the interstate highway system for normal traffic into the mass transportation mode.

You may cringe at the use of "force" so let me explain where even a deaf and blind man can understand (but he understands far better than most already). Waste and inefficiency in road building absorb highway trust funds. Efficiency and economy leave trust funds intact, only to be wasted.

We penalize the "good" and reward the "bad." Sounds very "dumber than dumb" to me, how about you?

If waste, fraud and inefficiency are not addressed first, before the stark reality of alternative funding and allocation of Highway Trust Funds, then we do not have "change" rather we are just doing business as usual with the "good old boys club" and deserve our just reward. For we have merely allowed an even greater largess to congress who retreat to their palatial estates, placating their vast personal wealth builders, while the rest of us swallow crow and eat dirt.

[Alt-A or Enter- Top of Page.](#)

[Return To Previous Page.](#)

Copyright:1986-2008