



Transportation Priorities

The current surface transportation authorization law (FAST Act, P.L. No. 114-94) runs through September 30, 2021. As Congress works on FAST Act reauthorization, NATaT has four priorities:

1. Enact a six-year surface transportation bill that directs more federal funds to towns and townships and allows those funds to be used on local roads.
2. Increase federal assistance for off-system bridges.
3. Ensure that any move to a vehicle-miles traveled (VMT) fee to help fund transportation infrastructure considers the lack of transportation alternatives for rural communities.
4. Restrict the flow of larger, heavier trucks on our roads and bridges.

Direct Funds to Towns and Townships

NATaT requests that more federal transportation funds be directed to local decision-making authorities, not just state departments of transportation or metropolitan planning organizations. Otherwise, those funds will never reach towns and townships where most of the roads are managed.

Towns and townships do not receive federal transportation funding unless they are recipients of a competitive grant award. However, in many states,

towns and townships manage more miles of road than any other government entity. (See chart.) Federal funds flow directly to state departments of transportation and to metropolitan planning organizations, but rarely make their way to the towns and townships that are responsible for maintaining the roads. NATaT supports efforts to ensure local roads in our communities receive a portion of the state’s Surface Transportation Block Grant (STBG) Program funds. Currently, communities with a population of less than 5,000 can access STBG funds for use on “rural minor collectors.” NATaT requests that those funds be allowed for use on “local roads.”¹

State	Road Miles Managed by Towns/Townships	% of Federal Funds
Minnesota	39%	<1%
Illinois	53%	<1%
Ohio	34%	<1%
Pennsylvania	64%	<1%
Wisconsin	54%	<1%
New York	50%	<1%
North Dakota	67%	0%
Michigan	66% of the state’s roads are in townships and managed by counties; townships reimburse counties 50-100%	

NATaT also supports efforts to ensure more smaller towns and townships have access to federal transportation funds. NATaT supports revising sub-allocations for STBG funds into four populations bands:

¹ Local roads are linked to rural minor collectors and rural major collectors to access highway corridors. Minor and major collectors – at least in NATaT member states – are maintained by counties.

200,000 and above; 50,000-200,000; 5,000-50,000; and under 5,000. (There are currently three population bands: 200,000 and above; 5,000-200,000; and under 5,000.) Under the current construct, a community with a population of 7,000 competes for funds with a community with a population of 170,000. Breaking up the 5,000 to 200,000 population will help more local governments gain fair access to federal assistance.

Continue to Fund Off-System Bridges

In the last two transportation reauthorizations, NATaT successfully advocated to maintain a 15 percent set-aside to fund off-system bridges. These are bridges that are generally owned by local governments and are not on the Federal-Aid Highway System. This set-aside helps local governments repair and rehabilitate structurally-deficient bridges that are unable to accommodate the demands of today's traffic. NATaT supports increased funds for bridge repair and replacement in FAST Act reauthorization and other transportation/infrastructure spending bills.

Address VMT Concerns

As federal receipts into the Highway Trust Fund continue to decline, federal policymakers are considering ways to fund the national transportation system. One mechanism is a "vehicle miles traveled" (VMT) fee. NATaT is concerned that a VMT fee would impact rural drivers disproportionately higher than others. Studies have shown that a per-mile VMT fee of between five cents and 25 cents would increase the daily work trip costs for low-income rural residents between \$2.80 and \$14 per day. NATaT wants to ensure that any effort to impose VMT fees considers the limited transportation options for rural residents and the resulting need to use their vehicles to access work and daily services. In addition to a fair VMT model, NATaT would support an examination of the following revenue raisers for reauthorization:

- Raise the federal gas tax and index it to inflation
- Replace the existing per-gallon tax with sales tax on the cost of fuel
- Introduce a per barrel of oil fee
- Introduce a federal vehicle registration fee
- Introduce a federal tax on rental cars
- Introduce a federal tax on automobile parts and vehicle maintenance

Oppose Heavier, Larger Trucks on our Roadways

There are efforts in Congress to increase the national truck weight limit on the federal highway system to 97,000 pounds (an additional 17,000 pounds to existing truck weight) and another proposal calling for longer double- and triple-trailer trucks. NATaT opposes these efforts as larger, heavier trucks imperil road safety and severely impact our already weakening infrastructure, especially on local roads and bridges where these vehicles ultimately travel.