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Federal commission recommends raising gas tax, charging usage

The U.S. is investing far too little in highways and transit, and needs to take a new approach to funding the surface transportation program, according to a report issued in late February 2009 by the National Surface Transportation Infrastructure Financing Commission.

Created by Congress as part of SAFETEA-LU to recommend transportation funding policy and action, the commission includes 15 members with various backgrounds — economics, finance, government, industry, law and public policy.

An annual investment of \$165 billion for highways and \$49 billion for transit is needed to maintain and improve the surface transportation system. The nation currently is investing only 35 percent of that, according to the report, ["Paying Our Way: A New Framework for Transportation Finance."](http://financecommission.dot.gov/Documents/NSTIF_Commission_Final_Report_Advance%20Copy_Feb09.pdf) (See report online at: http://financecommission.dot.gov/Documents/NSTIF_Commission_Final_Report_Advance%20Copy_Feb09.pdf)

To make up the shortfall, the commission recommends increasing the federal gas tax by 10 cents per gallon and indexing the tax to inflation. The gas tax — a portion of which helps fund transit programs — has lost one-third of its purchasing power since 1993, when it last was increased.

However, a gas tax increase alone won't sufficiently meet transportation funding needs. "With the expected shift to more fuel-efficient vehicles, it will be increasingly difficult to rely on the gas tax to raise the funds

needed to improve, let alone maintain, our nation's transportation infrastructure," said commission Chairman Robert Atkinson in a prepared statement.

So, the commission recommends shifting to a mileage-based usage fee by 2020. The federal government needs to facilitate state and local governments' ability to "raise their share of needed revenue in a way that also spurs efficient use of the system and stepped-up investment," such as by tolling portions of roads and charging premiums for rush-hour travel in heavily used urban corridors, the report states. The commission also is calling on lawmakers to prompt private investment and provide government credit support to help finance financing transportation infrastructure projects.

"All levels of government — federal, state, regional and local — must increase their financial investment in transportation to overcome the current shortfall, and the federal government must take a strong role in the process," said [American Public Transportation Association](#) President William Millar in a response to the report. "Increased investment in transportation infrastructure can and should be the leading way to re-energize the economy with jobs, productivity, growth and competitiveness."

(Source: Progressive Railroading, on-line article dated 02/27/09 written by PR editorial staff, for additional information please see the following web-link at: <http://www.progressiverailroading.com/10eastnews/default.asp?id=19793>)

Napolitano: DHS likely to miss cargo scanning deadline

In her first hearing before Congress since being confirmed, Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano today pledged to make progress in addressing the significant challenges facing the department. But she acknowledged her department is unlikely to meet a 2012 deadline for scanning all U.S.-bound cargo containers in foreign seaports.

"To do 100 percent scanning requires lots of agreements" with other countries, Napolitano said in response to a question from Rep. Peter DeFazio, D-Ore., who said the Bush administration did not push hard enough to meet a deadline it said was not doable. She noted there are many differences between scanning and screening -- which does not require a physical examination of the cargo -- and said "we're close to 100 percent screening."

But, she added, "my initial review is that the 2012 deadline [for scanning] won't be reached under the current state of the program." Republicans had opposed such a deadline, and a minority committee aide disputed DeFazio's claim that the Bush administration did not work hard enough to meet the 2012 deadline.

Napolitano was asked about whether the department will meet its April 15 deadline for requiring all port workers to obtain Transportation Worker Identification Cards. She said the TWIC program has been implemented at most ports. She said about 1.1 million workers must obtain the cards, a number others say is higher. Only 650,000 workers out of the 1 million who have applied have the cards as of mid-February, according to a panel aide. Napolitano said it is an issue she is discussing daily with her staff to ensure that as many workers as possible meet the deadline.

Other questions to Napolitano dealt with whether she believes the Federal Emergency Management Agency should be moved out of the department, as some lawmakers have suggested.

Several committee members said they oppose such a move. Napolitano said she has not discussed the issue with President Obama yet but observed that if FEMA is doing well in its job of preparing and responding to disasters and has good leadership and management, "where it fits into the organizational chart becomes less of an issue." A Homeland Security inspector general report released last week said moving the agency out of Homeland Security would cause "considerable upheaval" and weaken the agency.

While pledging to work with Napolitano to improve the department, Homeland Security Committee ranking member Peter King and other Republicans raised concerns about whether the administration and the department will place enough emphasis on combating terrorism.

Noting that the word "terrorism" was not used in her testimony, King said it is "important for us to have people in positions of leadership to remind people how real that threat is." Napolitano stressed in her opening testimony that protecting the nation's citizens, its land and its property would be the department's primary focus.

(Source: [CONGRESSDAILY](#) BY JULIANA GRUENWALD, 02/25/2009. For additional information, please see the following web-link: http://www.nextgov.com/nextgov/ng_20090225_7302.php)

Stimulus bill includes \$300 M for diesel emissions reduction grants

The economic stimulus bill (H.R. 1) agreed to by House and Senate conferees and passed by the House Feb. 13 includes \$300 million to fund grants for projects to reduce emissions from existing diesel engines by retrofitting trucks and buses with emissions control equipment.

Congress authorized \$200 million a year in funding for the program in 2005 but has appropriated only \$49.2 million for the program since then. The authorization was in the Diesel Emissions Reduction Act (DERA) which was included in energy legislation (Pub. L. No. 109-58).

Under DERA, the Environmental Protection Agency and the states provide grant money to projects that improve air quality by reducing diesel emissions from trucks and buses and equipment. The money is allocated on a competitive basis to projects that provide the greatest emissions reductions in areas that have the worst air quality.

Funding can be used to retrofit trucks with emissions controls such as diesel particulate filters or selective catalytic reduction to reduce nitrogen oxide emissions. It can also be used for idling reduction technology.

According to EPA, fine particle pollution, a major component of diesel emissions, causes thousands of premature deaths each year. Nitrogen oxides lead to the formation of ground-level ozone, which also has been linked to premature death, and causes asthma attacks and other respiratory illnesses, according to EPA. Diesel emissions are also a source of black carbon soot, which has been identified as a cause of global warming.

The law allocates 70 percent of DERA funding to EPA. According to EPA, the agency allocates this money to regional, state, local, tribal, or port agencies with jurisdiction over transportation or air quality. EPA also provides money to nonprofit organizations that represent or provide pollution reduction services to organizations that operate diesel fleets or have as their principal purpose the promo-

tion of transportation or air quality. These entities then distribute the money to eligible diesel emissions-reduction projects. EPA published a sample proposal in 2008 in which a city government asks for funding to retrofit school buses, snowplows, and bulldozers.

According to EPA, demand for the initial DERA funding exceeded the supply by five-to-one. Allen Schaeffer, executive director of the Diesel Technology Forum, told BNA he expects applicants who failed to get money from the first disbursement of DERA funding to reapply for the new money under the stimulus bill.

Schaeffer said DERA funding attracts other money for clean diesel projects from state or private sources, so that \$1 of DERA funding may result in \$1.50 of money being spent. The stimulus bill waives any cost-sharing requirements attached to DERA.

Mike Tunnell, director of environmental affairs for the American Trucking Associations, told BNA he understands from EPA that the agency will give applicants limited time to apply for the new money. S. William Becker, executive director of the National Association of Clean Air Agencies, said in a statement, "The projects to be funded will result in thousands of lives saved and tens of thousands of illnesses avoided."

Clean Air Watch President Frank O'Donnell praised the bill, saying, "This is extremely positive news that they are moving forward on it. This is a genuinely green jobs bill that will bring both health and global warming benefits." For more information on EPA's diesel emissions reduction grant program is available at <http://www.epa.gov/otaq/diesel/grantfund.htm#2009>

(Source: Landline Magazine.com, February 2, 2009 – by Charlie Morasch, staff writer, for additional information please see: http://www.landlinemag.com/todays_news/Daily/2009/Feb09/020209/020209-01.htm)

Fleet of electric trucks is bound for port of Los Angeles

The standing joke about the ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach used to be that they were like the diesel version of elephant graveyards: the place where old trucks went to die. But lately, they have become a proving ground for technology that produces little or no pollution.

On Tuesday, February 24th the first of 25 heavy-duty all-electric trucks rolled off a new Los Angeles assembly line. All are slated to work at the Port of Los Angeles or to make short hauls to and from the harbor.

The small fleet results from a partnership involving the Port of Los Angeles, the South Coast Air Quality Management District and a small business called Balqon Corp.

For a vehicle that is going to be doing a lot of grunt work with rusty cargo containers, its coming out party was pretty splashy.

Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa was there for the unveiling of the Nautilus E30 and even took it for a short spin. He was joined by Los Angeles City Councilwoman Janice Hahn, Los Angeles Board of Harbor Commissioners President S. David Freeman and Santa Ana Mayor Miguel A. Pulido, who is a member of the air board.

The ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach have launched the nation's most ambitious port cleanup effort, which bans the oldest and dirtiest trucks and charges cargo fees to help fund the purchase of thousands of new clean diesel and natural gas trucks. The ports also have been offering seed money for promising new technologies.

The Nautilus E30 has a range of 40 miles (under a full load) to 60 miles (when not hauling). It powers up by plugging into a 230-volt or 480-volt charger for about three hours.



Christine Cotter / Los Angeles Times

Balqon Chief Executive Balwinder Samra received \$527,000 from the L.A. port and the air board to fund development of the electric truck. As part of the deal, Samra moved his company from Orange County to Harbor City, near the port, and he will pay a royalty of \$1,000 to the port and the air board for every truck he sells that isn't used at the port.

"We had made equipment for trucks and buses before, but we could never afford to build a whole truck before this," Samra said. "Now, we've proven we can do it."

(Source: LA Times.com, February 25, 2009, by Ronald D. White at: <http://www.latimes.com/business/la-fi-electric-truck25-2009feb25,0,641132.story>)

GreenLA and ClimateLA

The City of Los Angeles released its climate action plan, [Green LA: An Action Plan to Lead the Nation in Fighting Global Warming](#), in May 2007.

The Plan sets forth a goal of reducing the City's greenhouse gas emissions to 35% below 1990 levels by the year 2030, one of the most aggressive goals of any big city in the U.S.

For additional information, please see the following website: http://www.lacity.org/ead/environment/ead_GreenLAClimateLA.htm

DHS to use more simulations in infrastructure protection

The Homeland Security Department will rely more on simulations to test the integrity of critical infrastructure and key resources, according to a 175-page plan released last week. But one security specialist said the plan was thin on details.

DHS will increase coordination with the science and technology community on requirements for the "development, maintenance and application of modeling capabilities," according to the [National Infrastructure Protection Plan](#) released on Feb. 19.

The plan -- an update of a 2006 strategy -- emphasized the need to incorporate simulations into training at agencies such as the Coast Guard, which is responsible for overseeing protection of the maritime transportation sector.

DHS will provide guidance on the testing of commercially available software tools, and look for opportunities for public-private partnerships, the plan stated.

The principal modeling, simulation, and analysis organization is the National Infrastructure Simulation and Analysis Center, located at the Sandia and Los Alamos National laboratories in New Mexico and operated by the DHS Office of Infrastructure Protection.

Alan Paller, director of research at the SANS Institute, a nonprofit cyber security research group in Bethesda, Md., said the strategy is too broad.

"The authors [of the plan] are unable to communicate anything specific that these simulations do, have done, or will do," Paller said.

Furthermore, "[DHS] provides no proof that what they are doing matters, and they provide no plan of action -- just a laundry list of coordination activities," he said. "It's a shame the nation invested anything in this [document]."

Some observers [say](#) past simulation exercises such as DHS' 2006 and 2008 Cyber Storm drills did not go far enough to mirror an actual cyber attack, but few disagree that such drills are critical for revealing potential vulnerabilities.

"There's a huge need for more simulation and modeling in cyber security, particularly as it concerns control systems and their nexus to the physical security of critical infrastructures like the electric grid, water purification and chemical manufacturing," said Gregory Garcia, who served as assistant secretary of cyber security and telecommunications at DHS under the Bush administration and opened his own information security consulting firm, Garcia Strategies, last month.

He cited as a valuable lesson the 2007 Aurora experiment, in which researchers at Idaho National Laboratory demonstrated they could hack into the programs that controlled a generator and manipulate settings so it would self-destruct. "Just a few thousand bytes of malicious code can tell a picture in a thousand words," he said.

(Source: See on-line article at Next Gov. com by [Jill R. Aitoro](#) 02/23/2009, for additional information please see: http://www.nextgov.com/nextgov/ng_20090223_9398.php)

Appropriations bill seeks end to cross-border trucking program

A federal appropriations bill introduced in late February 2009 in the House of Representatives includes a provision that would put an end to the controversial cross-border trucking program introduced in 2007.

If signed into law, the bill would prohibit the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) from running "a cross-border motor carrier demonstration program to allow Mexican-domiciled motor carriers to operate beyond the commercial zones along the international border between the United States and Mexico" the bill reads.

The House Committee on Appropriations introduced the legislation, which includes \$410 billion of appropriations, Monday, an announcement from the committee said. After the program began, lawmakers criticized the Department of Transportation for failing to address concerns over the safety. Jim Hoffa, president of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters, applauded the provision in the appropriations bill.

"There's no guarantee that trucks or drivers from Mexico are safe," he said. The Owner-Operator Independent Drivers Association has long opposed opening the border to long-haul operations for Mexico-domiciled motor carriers citing Mexico's poor oversight of its trucking industry and the threat to the safety of highway users in the U.S.

The Association filed suit with the 9th Circuit of the U.S. Court of Appeals in December 2007 seeking to stop the program. The court has not issued a ruling in the case. OOIDA hasn't been alone in its opposition to the program. Congress has already tried to cut the funding of the program once before.

(Source: Landline Magazine.com, February 26, 2009, — By Jami Jones, senior editor at the following web-link: http://www.landlinemag.com/Special_Reports/2009/Feb09/022609_cross_border.htm)

Truck-involved fatality rate declines 5.8 percent in 2007

Figures recently released by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) indicate that the truck-involved fatality rate in 2007 declined 5.8 percent to 2.12 per 100 million miles from 2.25 per 100 million miles in 2006.

Since new hours-of-service regulations took effect in 2005, the truck-involved fatality rate has come down more than 10 percent and is at its lowest since records began to be kept in 1975. "This achievement is great for all of us who travel our nation's highways," stated Bill Graves, President and CEO of the American Trucking Associations (ATA). "The trucking industry remains committed to safety and ATA will continue to advance its aggressive safety agenda in an effort to continue this outstanding trend."

The truck-involved fatal crash rate and the truck-occupant fatality rate also declined from 2006 to 2007. The truck-involved fatal crash rate declined 4.5 percent to 1.85 per 100 million miles and the truck-occupant fatality rate declined 1.98 percent to 0.35 per 100 million miles. These crash rates are based on the FHWA's figures that report vehicle miles traveled by truck increased in 2007 to 226.96 billion

miles from 222.5 billion in 2006. During that same time, the actual number of truck-involved fatal crashes fell to 4,190 from 4,321.

Access data on truck-involved fatal crashes can be found [here](#). Access vehicle miles traveled (VMT) by truck can be found [here](#). Augmenting an established platform of successful safety initiatives, ATA unveiled a bold highway safety agenda in October 2008 designed to further reduce the number of highway-related fatalities and injuries for all drivers on the nation's highways.

The 18 safety recommendations include promoting greater safety belt use by commercial drivers; re-instituting a national maximum speed limit; speed governing of all trucks; and a decade-long initiative to create a national clearinghouse for drug and alcohol test results.

To receive the full Safety Task Force Report, email your request to: media@trucking.org. (Source: U.S. Newswire, 02/16/09, for additional information see e-news at AOL.com at: <http://news.aol.com/article/truck-involved-fatality-rate-declines-58/344900?>)

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Famous Quote of the Day:

"Success is to be measured not so much by the position that one has reached in life as by the obstacles which he has overcome while trying to succeed."

--**Booker T. Washington**,
American author, educator
and black leader

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Next FHWA HQ's Talking Freight Web Seminar (Wednesday, March 18, 2009)

The Federal Highway Administration's (FHWA) Office of Freight Management and Operations and the Office of Planning host the "Talking Freight" web seminars.

These web seminars are part of a broader Freight Professional Development Program aimed at providing technical assistance, training, tools, and information to help the freight and planning workforce meet the transportation challenges of tomorrow. The web seminars are held on a monthly basis throughout the year and are open at no cost to all interested parties in both the public and private sectors.

The next FHWA HQ's Talking Freight Seminar will be held on March 18th cover the topic of :
"Freight Corridor Programs".
Development of a coordinated net-

work of national freight transportation corridors will be vital for the continued economic prosperity and competitiveness of the United States.

In this session representatives from Canada, Mexico and the United States will discuss freight corridor programs that are currently underway and reveal best practices. For additional information, including how to register for this webinar event, please see the following FHWA web-site: http://ops.fhwa.dot.gov/freight/fpd/talking_freight.htm

FHWA reports December 2008 traffic volume trends

Based on preliminary reports from the State Highway Agencies, travel during December 2008 on all roads and streets in the nation changed by -1.6 percent (-3.8 billion vehicle miles) resulting in estimated travel for the month at 237.2 billion vehicle-miles.

This total includes 77.4 billion vehicle-miles on rural roads and 159.7 billion vehicle-miles on urban roads and streets. Cumulative Travel changed by -3.6 percent (-107.9 billion vehicle miles). The larger changes to rural and urban travel are primarily because of the expansion in urban boundaries reflected in

the 2000 census. Travel estimates for 2004 and beyond will also reflect this adjustment.

Travel for the current month, the cumulative yearly total, as well as the moving 12-month total on all roads and streets is shown at the FHWA website shown here:
<http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/ohim/tvtw/08dectvt/index.cfm>

