

# Reauthorization: Putting the SAFE in TEA and the training in transportation

AS THE current *Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21)* nears its September 30 expiration, many involved in the transportation workforce have grown increasingly concerned that federal financial commitments to homeland security will compromise transportation funding in the upcoming reauthorization.

On May 14, U.S. Secretary of Transportation Norman Mineta unveiled the Bush administration proposal for the next federal surface transportation act. The Safe, Accountable, Flexible, and Efficient Transportation Equity Act of 2003 (SAFETEA) calls for a \$247 billion investment over the next six years.

This amount is far short of the \$375 billion sought by the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure. Committee Chairman Don Young commended some aspects of the bill; "however," he stated, "there simply isn't enough in the administration's bill to address our nation's growing congestion problems."

The details of SAFETEA are especially critical at this time because of increased demands on the transportation system, growing expectations for its performance, and current concerns for transportation safety and security. Investment in transportation also results in a direct boost to our economy; according to AASHTO, every billion dollars of national highway investment generates 47,500 jobs. With adequate funding, programs such as LTAP create training for the transportation workers in these jobs.

The final details of the transportation reauthorization are yet to be worked out by Congress, but the emphasis will certainly be on improving transportation safety and preserving critical transportation infrastructure. Elements of SAFETEA likely to impact local transportation agencies in Iowa are summarized below.

## Transportation safety

- **State strategic highway safety plans:**

Ensure that each state develops and implements a comprehensive, collaborative strategic highway safety plan. The Iowa Safety Management System *Toolbox of Highway Safety Strategies* has been very effective in building a multidisciplinary, multi-jurisdictional approach to highway safety in Iowa.

- **State highway safety improvement programs:**

Implement a highway safety improvement program whereby each state analyzes highway safety problems and opportunities and produces a list of candidate projects for 90 percent federal funding. With the help of CTRE, the Iowa DOT has already developed an effective system for identifying safety improvement candidate locations.

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- **State traffic safety information systems:**

Make grants to states that adopt and implement programs to improve their traffic safety information systems, including the collection and analysis of crash data, driver licensing and vehicle registration information, citation and court records related to traffic violations and convictions, emergency

medical services information, and data on roadway characteristics. The National Model, developed in Iowa by CTRE and the Iowa DOT, provides a method for achieving this.

- **Intelligent transportation systems (ITS):**

Establish an ITS research and development program to provide funding for research, development, and testing necessary to deploy advanced technology to improve the safety and performance of the nation's surface transportation systems. Establish an ITS performance incentive program to provide funding to states based on progress in achieving specific milestones related to operational performance; Iowa may qualify for \$14.6 million over six years.

- **State performance-based safety grants:**

Make grants to states based upon the performance of their highway safety programs in terms of (1) motor vehicle crash fatalities, (2) alcohol-related crash fatalities, and (3) motorcycle, bicycle, and pedestrian crash fatalities.

- **State safety belt grants:** Make grants to states to (1) encourage states to adopt and enforce primary safety belt laws and (2) increase the rate of safety belt use.

- **State impaired driving program grants:** Make grants to states that have comprehensive impaired driving countermeasures programs.

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## Technology transfer

- **Local Technical Assistance Program:** Continue LTAP to provide training, resources, and assistance to local government transportation workers in Iowa and across the country. (More federal funding is needed to help support this important program—see page 8.)
- **University-Industry-Government Partnerships Program:** Recreate the University Transportation Centers Program as the University-Industry-Government Partnerships Program. The plan proposes to remove earmarked funds for certain specified institutions to ensure an open, competitive process. The new program would require that grant applicants have formal research and education partnerships with at least one private sector partner and at least one public sector government partner. The federal cost share would not exceed 50 percent. One of the current university transportation centers—the Midwest Transportation Consortium—is centered in Iowa at CTRE.
- **Transportation Scholarship Opportunities Program:** Develop the Transportation Scholarship Opportunities Program to provide students with academic tuition assistance and opportunities to participate in cooperative employment programs. This program is expected to improve the US DOT's recruiting efforts at a time when the transportation workforce is suffering significant attrition and understaffing. LTAP is well positioned to provide training for these new transportation workers. CTRE has also started a program to recruit high school students for transportation careers.

## Highways and pavements

- **Interstate Maintenance Program:** Change the emphasis on the interstate highway system from initial construction to reconstruction and preservation. Authorize \$339 million to Iowa over six years.
- **Long-Term Pavement Performance (LTPP) Program and Innovative Pavement Research and Deployment Program:** Continue the LTPP Program to research, develop, and deliver technologies for long-life pavements that are safe and cost effective, meet customer service needs, and can be effectively maintained. Continue the Innovative Pavement Research and Deployment Program, which focuses on innovative pavement repair, rehabilitation, and construction. The state of Iowa, Iowa State University, and the PCC Center are leaders in concrete pavement research that benefits motorists across Iowa and the country.

## Bridges

- **Highway Bridge Program:** Provide more federal funding to states for replacement and rehabilitation of deficient public bridges. Many bridges in Iowa, including high-cost river crossings, are in need of funding to be replaced. Allow the use of Highway Bridge Program funds for preventative maintenance activities. Authorize \$340 million to Iowa over six years.
- **Long-Term Bridge Performance Program and Innovative Bridge Research and Deployment Program:** Establish the Long-Term Bridge Performance Program to research a new generation of long-term, high-performance, low-maintenance bridges and manage the safety, reliability, and security

of existing bridges. Change the name of the Innovative Bridge Research and Construction Program to the Innovative Bridge Research and Deployment Program to reflect the expanded focus of the program from innovative material technology in the construction of bridges to innovative designs, material, and construction methods in the construction, repair, and rehabilitation of bridges. Iowa State University's Bridge Engineering Center is in a position to contribute to some of these activities.

## Transportation security

- Promote interagency cooperation in preparing for transportation's growing role in emergency response and recovery.
- Research and develop transportation-related anti-terrorism measures necessary to safeguard the traveling public, ensure the free flow of goods and services, and protect the infrastructure investment.
- Expand the federal-aid eligibility definitions "construction" and "maintenance" to include transportation-related homeland security projects such as those for detecting potential attacks, preventing actual attacks, protecting the highway infrastructure against attacks and resulting damages, ensuring emergency preparedness, and developing the ability for quick response and recovery.

## Environment

- **Air quality:** Restrict Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program funds to projects that reduce emissions through new or enhanced transportation facilities or services. Encourage review of estimated emissions reductions by state and

local air agencies to determine the best project candidates with respect to reducing emissions. Authorize \$43 million to Iowa over six years.

- **Project delivery:** Streamline the environmental review process to improve project delivery.

#### Funding

- **Funding firewalls:** Ensure that all federal transportation excise taxes are devoted exclusively to transportation purposes through funding firewall mechanisms. Redirect 2.5 cents per gallon of the

ethanol fuel tax currently deposited into the General Fund back into the Highway Trust Fund.

- **State planning and research funding:** Increase the State Planning and Research Program set-aside from 2 percent to 2.5 percent to fund improved data collection by the states.

#### For more information

The SAFETEA bill and analysis are available at FHWA's website, [www.fhwa.dot.gov/reauthorization/](http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/reauthorization/).

National, state, and local interest

groups—such as the Iowa DOT, National Association of County Engineers, AASHTO, American Society of Civil Engineers, American Public Works Association, and American Road and Transportation Builders Association—continue to provide their responses and recommendations. For example, ASCE's TEA-21 Reauthorization Action Center website, [www.asce.org/govrel/tea3/](http://www.asce.org/govrel/tea3/), provides updates on reauthorization, as well as general background information and links to related websites.

*Technology News* will provide a follow-up when final details are available. •

## Want to contact the federal government re SAFETEA?

#### U.S. House of Representatives

House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure  
2165 Rayburn HOB  
Washington, DC 20515  
202-225-9446 (voice)  
To contact individual members electronically:  
[www.house.gov/transportation/](http://www.house.gov/transportation/)

Don Young (AK), Chair  
House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure  
2111 Rayburn HOB  
Washington, DC 20515  
202-225-5765 (voice)  
202-225-0425 (fax)  
To contact electronically:  
[www.house.gov/donyoung/opinion\\_form.htm](http://www.house.gov/donyoung/opinion_form.htm)

#### U.S. Senate

Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation  
508 Dirksen Senate Office Bldg.  
Washington, DC 20510-6125  
202-224-1251 (majority)  
202-224-0411 (minority)  
[www.senate.gov/~commerce/](http://www.senate.gov/~commerce/)  
To contact individual members electronically:  
[www.senate.gov/~commerce/contact/index.cfm](http://www.senate.gov/~commerce/contact/index.cfm)

John Cain (AZ), Chair  
Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation  
241 Russell Senate Office Bldg.  
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202-224-2235 (voice)  
202-228-2862 (fax)  
To contact electronically: <http://mccain.senate.gov/index.cfm?fuseaction=Contact.Home>

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