



A bold voice for transportation workers

December 3, 2015

Vote YES on the Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act

Dear Senator:

On behalf of the Transportation Trades Department, AFL-CIO (TTD), I urge you to vote for the conference committee report on H.R. 22, the Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act. We commend Chairman Shuster, Ranking Member DeFazio, Chairman Inhofe and Ranking Member Boxer for finalizing a bipartisan and multi-year surface transportation bill that will create and sustain good middle-class jobs and make urgently needed investments in our transit systems, roads, bridges and passenger rail network.

Following years of legislative gridlock and underinvestment, our transportation network has languished and is poorly equipped to meet both existing and future demands on the system. Collectively, these decisions and outcomes have undermined our economy by depressing employment, slowing the movement of goods and people, and reducing the incentive for states and municipalities to make long-term investment decisions. Fortunately, this bill marks a turning point away from short-term extensions, flat-line funding, and political timidity. By shortening the bill's duration by a year, the FAST Act maintains long-term certainty while providing real funding growth so that our nation can meet the demands facing our neglected surface transportation network.

The Conference Committee also produced a bill that strikes the right balance on a number of critical and potentially contentious policy issues. The FAST Act directs the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) to take a long-overdue step to address the assault crisis facing transit operators across the nation by requiring the agency to issue a rule on how to effectively mitigate workplace violence. The bill takes a more responsible approach to transit public-private partnerships (P3s) than first proposed and seeks to prevent the displacement of workers or undermining labor standards in the establishment of such agreements. We are also pleased the Committee has leveraged the bill's investments to strengthen our nation's transportation manufacturing sector. By increasing the FTA's minimum domestic content standards for rolling stock procurements and maintaining Buy America standards for Amtrak, the bill will help foster a domestic market for equipment and materials and create good-paying jobs at home.

Of equal importance, conferees did not allow extraneous and ideologically-driven anti-worker provisions to distract from the pressing investment, policy, and safety priorities at the heart of this bill. Notably, they rejected attacks on port worker collective bargaining rights, adopted provisions to preserve the role of sound science in determining the utility of hair specimen drug testing, and dismissed heavy-handed attempts to contract out public-sector engineering work.

Transportation Trades Department, AFL-CIO

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Edward Wytkind, President / Larry I. Willis, Secretary-Treasurer



The FAST Act also reauthorizes Amtrak and hazmat training programs as well as makes improvements to railroad safety. Building off of the Passenger Rail Reform and Improvement Act passed by the House earlier this year, and the Railroad Reform, Enhancement and Efficiency Act passed by the Senate Commerce Committee, this bill will help sustain America's national passenger railroad, protect thousands of middle-class jobs and allow Amtrak and its employees to meet the demand for rail transportation. Importantly, this bill rejects dangerous privatization proposals and affirms Amtrak's role as our national passenger rail carrier and a critical part of America's interconnected transportation system. The FAST Act also takes steps to improve rail safety. The bill requires the implementation of new technology needed to help prevent fatigue-related accidents and measures necessary to better protect track and signal workers from oncoming trains, and provides funds to implement Positive Train Control (PTC) mandates. The bill also maintains successful grant programs that train hazmat employees on handling dangerous materials and prepare firefighters for responding to hazmat emergencies.

Finally, the bill includes the reauthorization of the Export-Import Bank. Since the expiration of the Ex-Im Bank on June 30th, hundreds of middle-class manufacturing jobs have already been lost and thousands more are threatened by continued failure to reauthorize the Bank. By reauthorizing the Bank, we can ensure that American manufacturers can continue to compete with foreign competitors that benefit from export credit agencies around the globe and support thousands of good middle-class jobs dependent on the Banks's long-term viability.

We applaud conferees for casting aside partisan differences and reporting out a robust, long-term bill. We urge you to vote yes on final passage of the FAST Act. If you have questions or concerns, please contact me directly or TTD Legislative Representative Jeff Pavlak at 202/628-9262.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Edward Wytkind', with a large, stylized flourish at the end.

Edward Wytkind
President