

Metropolitan Transportation Commission and Association of Bay Area Governments  
Joint MTC Legislation Committee and ABAG Legislation Committee

February 14, 2020

Agenda Item 9a

Tom Bulger's Report

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**Subject:** January 2020 Report from Washington, D.C. advocate.

**Recommendation:** Information

**Attachments:** Attachment A: Tom Bulger's Report – January 2020



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Therese W. McMillan

## January 2020 Monthly Washington, D.C. Report



**To:** Therese W. McMillian, Executive Director

**From:** Tom Bulger, President GRI

**Date:** January 31, 2020

**RE:** Monthly Report for January 2020

- **House Democrats Announce 5-Year, \$760 Billion Infrastructure Plan**
- **House Ways and Means Infrastructure Funding Hearing**
- **House Republicans Support Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) Report**
- **House Democrats Unveil Climate Legislation**
- **Electric Vehicle Legislation**
- **Rep. Blumenauer (D-OR) Housing Forum**
- **Washington, D.C. Trip**
- **Meetings**

### **House Democrats Announce 5-Year, \$760 Billion Infrastructure Plan**

The highlights of the House Democrats infrastructure plan (Moving Forward) includes \$760 Billion over 5-years across numerous infrastructure accounts. The proposed funding is not on top of current spending. Key funding levels are as follows:

- Highways - \$319 Billion
- Transit - \$105 Billion
- Safety - \$10 Billion
- Passenger Rail - \$55 Billion

The plan promotes more sustainability, reducing carbon emissions and greater resiliency with a zero-carbon transportation goal in the future.

The Plan is silent on how to pay for future surface transportation infrastructure funding.

Additional details will become available in the coming weeks. The House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure (T&I) is expected to release a legislative proposal to renew the Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act in about two months.

The Republican response from Rep. Sam Graves (R-MO) was that he didn't agree with all of the Democrat's infrastructure principles but would play a role in the development of infrastructure legislation this year. In addition, he and his colleague Rep. Rodney Davis (R-IL), Ranking Member of the Subcommittee on Highways and Transit, said that they would focus on:

- Long-term sustainability of the Highway Trust Fund;
- Technology to improve infrastructure;
- Streamline project delivery;
- Address rural infrastructure needs;
- Ensure state flexibility; and
- Focus on existing core programs.

### **House Ways and Means Infrastructure Funding Hearing**

Concurrent with the House Democrats Infrastructure Plan, the House Ways and Means Committee held an Infrastructure hearing on January 29<sup>th</sup>. Before I detail this important hearing there was very little discussion of replacing the current federal gas and diesel excise taxes with a national pilot program for a vehicle miles traveled (VMT) user fee. Instead, the hearing focused on the usual financing band-aids that we have come to know over the last 27 years in which the current federal user fees have remained unchanged. Much of the hearing's discussion centered on fixing the Highway Trust Fund's funding dilemma by raising the user fees with indexing immediately. Interestingly, Build America Bonds (BABs), which had been widely popular during the recession until phased out, were supported.

Republican members called for the elimination or reduction of the transit funding from the Highway Trust Fund. Currently, the Highway Trust Fund invests 80 percent of its resources in highways and 20 percent in transit.

### **House Republicans Support Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) Report**

The state of Washington released a new report that recommends shifting from the current transportation user fees to a VMT fee to fund the state's highway system. The House T&I Republicans, led by Ranking Member Sam Graves (R-MO), issued a press release supporting the conclusions of the state of Washington's VMT report. They further stated that transitioning to a VMT system is a more equitable way to charge drivers for the roads they use.

### **House Democrats Unveil Climate Legislation**

On January 28, 2020, the House Committee on Energy and Commerce Democrats released a draft proposal to push the building, industrial, transportation and electricity sectors to reach net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. The proposal would set a national clean electricity standard, require states to develop individualized plans to reach net-zero emissions, create a national climate bank and require projects receiving federal funding to use cleaner materials. The draft legislation does not include carbon pricing.

### **Electric Vehicle Legislation**

On January 9, 2020, the House Energy and Commerce subcommittee advanced H.R.5545 by Chairman Bobby Rush (D-IL) that would authorize more than \$6 Billion annually in grants and rebates for electric vehicle infrastructure deployment and manufacturing over the next decade. Also, the bill would authorize tens of billions of dollars to expand the nation's electric vehicle charging network.

### **Rep. Blumenauer (D-OR) Housing Forum**

On January 25, 2020, Rep. Earl Blumenauer (D-OR) hosted a housing forum in Portland, Oregon with Rep. Rashida (D-MI). Subsequently, they and other members of the Congressional Progressive Caucus unveiled a housing framework that declares housing as a "fundamental human right" and Congressman Blumenauer released a report titled "Locked Out: Reversing Federal Housing Failures and Unlocking Opportunity."

### **Washington, D.C. Trip**

Currently, we are scheduling Washington, D.C. meetings for MTC and ABAG at the end of March 2020.

### **Meetings**

- On January 23, 2020, I met with Kathy Deidrick, Chief of Staff House T&I Committee about the Surface Transportation Block Grant Program Coalition recommendations to increase this Federal Highway Administration block grant allocation to Metropolitan Planning Organizations.
- Attended the US Conference of Mayors Mid-Winter meeting at the Hilton Hotel