

Floor Statement of
Senator Max Baucus
Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century
{Text of Remarks as Prepared for Delivery}

In Common Sense, the American patriot Thomas Paine wrote in 1776:

“The landholder, the farmer, the manufacturer, the merchant, the tradesman, and every occupation, prospers by the aid which each receives from the other, and from the whole. Common interest regulates their concerns, and forms their law. Common interest produces common security.”

In the 240 years since Paine’s pamphlet helped define who we are as Americans, our transportation system has become the cornerstone of our common interest.

There are few things under the sun that are not impacted by our highways, roads, bridges and transit systems.

Yet, we can too easily take our network for granted.

A recent Rockefeller Foundation survey found that two-thirds of all respondents believed America should invest more in infrastructure.

That same survey found that two-thirds of all Americans believed they should not have to pay any more for this increase in infrastructure investment.

That means we have to rise to the challenge in Congress to come up with a Highway Bill that invests in infrastructure without asking folks to pay more than their fair share.

According to the US Chamber of Commerce’s Transportation Performance Index, we could lose nearly \$340 billion in potential economic growth over the next five years if we do not pass a Highway Bill and provide the certainty our economy needs.

Our transportation system depends on substantial investments from the federal government.

This investment consistently yields a big return for American jobs.

In my home state of Montana the last Highway bill created or sustained more than 18,000 good-paying jobs. And nationwide it put approximately 35,000 people to work for every billion dollars invested.

Folks, these are not just statistics.

These numbers represent families able to put food on the table.

These numbers represent small businesses able to attract new customers.

I know these types of investments work because I spent a day working alongside a road construction crew on Amsterdam Road in Bozeman.

They showed me the ropes of running a road grader a paver and an excavator.

And during the workday, I talked with about a dozen workers who said their families depended on the project for their livelihood.

Their work also had a major impact on the community because Amsterdam Road is one of the most traveled roads in the area.

Investing in our transportation infrastructure is investing in our families and our economy.

This bill seeks to maintain that investment through 2013.

I would prefer a longer bill to provide greater certainty.

But, we are already 2 years past due. We must work together now to get something done now. And a two-year bill provides the compromise we need to get there.

I have worked on this bill for about four years from the leadership perspective of two different Senate committees: the Environment and Public Works Committee, which provided the authorization for roads, highways, bridges and various forms of non-motorized transportation; and, the Finance Committee, which provided the money needed to do this bill.

From the investment perspective, I can tell you first-hand that this bill specifically focuses on those programs that are truly in our shared national interest. It consolidates nearly 90 road programs down to approximately 30 programs that rely on the Highway Trust Fund.

This bill also focuses on dramatically improving our national capacity for data-gathering and data-sharing. We sought to enable states to address safety and mobility difficulties by seeing what solutions have worked in other states.

The bill creates for the first time a dedicated Freight program to address interstate commerce.

The bill expands TIFIA, a lending program that leverages private sector investment.

This is a good investment.

And history tells us every \$1 dollar we put in can leverage \$30 dollars in private sector investment.

And, this bill has no earmarks.

Senators Boxer, Inhofe, Vitter and I worked hard to achieve agreements. I thank my colleagues who serve on the Environment and Public Works Committee for unanimously approving this bill and its reforms.

I especially want to also applaud Chairman Boxer and Ranking Member Inhofe for their leadership.

Next, from the perspective of the Finance Committee, the bill provides the Highway Trust Fund with sufficient funding to last at least until the end of Fiscal Year 2013.

The Highway Trust Fund simply does not bring in enough revenue from its traditional funding sources, such as the fuel tax, to meet our national needs.

As a result, Democrats and Republicans on the Finance Committee had to look elsewhere to ensure for the short-term that we could maintain current levels of federal investment. For the long-term, we should use the opportunity to decide what we want for a transportation network in the 21st Century.

Where we could apply unused fuel tax money that currently goes to the Leaking Underground Storage Tank trust fund surplus, the Finance Committee did so with support from Democrats and Republicans.

And, where we transferred money from the General Fund to the Highway Trust Fund, we sought to backfill the General Fund by closing tax gaps or focusing on tax scofflaws.

It's important that we make sure the Highway Bill stay focused on supporting the economy. In Montana, our highways are our lifeblood.

We log a lot of hours at the wheel and it is part of who we are.

We are the fourth-largest state in the nation for land-mass, but we have fewer residents than Rhode Island, the smallest state in size.

As my friend Senator Mike Mansfield said in 1967, "Montanans are formed by the vastness of a state whose mountains rise to 12,000 feet in granite massives, piled one upon another as though by some giant hand. To drive across the state is to journey, in distances, from Washington, D.C., north to Toronto, or south to Florida. In area, we can accommodate Virginia, Maryland, Delaware, Pennsylvania and New York, and still have room for the District of Columbia.

"Yet, in all this vastness, we are ... less than a million people. "

A few weeks ago, we just tipped the needle on a million residents.

Still, we lack the population to make the necessary investments federal-aid roads and interstates by ourselves. And we shouldn't have to.

With more than 10 million visitors annually, and with the majority of our truck traffic originating and ending out-of-state, we rely on the federal program with good reason.

It is in our common interest.

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