

February 2015 Monthly Report for MTC

To: Steve Heminger, Executive Director
From: Tom Bulger, President, GRI
Re: Monthly Report for February 2015
Date: March 3, 2015

- **MTC Testifies Before the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee**
- **MTC Trip to Washington, D.C., March 2015**
- **Federal Gas Tax Legislation**
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MTC Testifies Before the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee

On February 25, Steve Heminger, MTC Executive Director testified before the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee. The hearing was titled “The Importance of MAP-21 Reauthorization: Perspectives from Owners, Operators and Users of the System.”

Besides Mr. Heminger, the following provided testimony:

- Mr. Carlos Braceras, Executive Director, Utah Department of Transportation
- Mr. Thomas Riordan, President and CEO, Neenah Enterprises Inc. (For the National Association of Manufacturers)
- Mr. David Gardner, Vice President of Supply Chain and Customer Experience, Ingredion, Inc. (For the U.S. Chamber of Commerce)
- Mr. Walter Rowan, President, Susquehanna Glass Company

Chairman James Inhofe (R-Okla.) and Ranking Member Senator Barbara Boxer (D-Calif.) both stated a long-term surface transportation bill must be enacted before the May 31 deadline.

Mr. Heminger's testimony contained three main points:

- 1) He thanked the Committee for the major improvements contained in MAP-21, namely performance, program consolidation, freight policy and permit streamlining;
- 2) The next reauthorization needs to focus on Metropolitan Areas; and
- 3) The Congress needs to find a long-term revenue source to pay for infrastructure improvements beyond just what is necessary to maintain the system.

Later at the hearing, Senator Boxer noted the Senate Finance Committee has not produced a plan to pay for a new authorization bill. The Senator offered six funding options that could be explored:

- 1) Gas tax increase with an offset for low-income individuals;
- 2) Replace transportation fees with a wholesale fee on the price of fuel;
- 3) A gas tax combined with off shore repatriation of corporate tax domestic company's profits;
- 4) New vehicles tax;
- 5) An honor based vehicle miles traveled; and
- 6) Expand federal bonding activities.

MTC Trip to Washington, D.C., March 2015

The logistics for the March 16 through March 18, MTC trip to D.C. are nearly complete. Accommodations are reserved, the California Transportation Congressional Reception contactors have been secured, RSVP'S are managed on a daily basis and the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee room details have been finalized. Currently we are working on securing Congressional, Administration, and D.C. based affiliated interest group meetings.

Federal Gas Tax Legislation

Congressman Earl Blumenauer (D-Ore.) has introduced H.R. 680. Currently, the Federal Excise Tax on gasoline is 18.3 cents per gallon. In 2016, the bill would raise the Federal excise tax to 26.3 cents per gallon. In 2017, the tax would increase to 30.3 cents per gallon. After 2017, the tax would raise to 33.3 cents per gallon until before 2028.

Diesel fuel or kerosene is taxed at 24.3 cents per gallon. In 2016, it would raise to 32.3 cents per gallon. In 2017, it would increase to 36.3 cents per gallon. After 2017 and before 2027, it would increase to 39.3 cents per gallon.

The bill includes a cost of living adjustment with 1992 calculated as the base year.

Federal Transit Benefit Bill Introduced

After nearly securing passage of a transit benefit bill in the lame Duck session of the 113rd Congress, Rep. Peter T. King (R-N.Y.) introduced a new Transit Bill, H.R. 990.

The bill is similar to last year's bill, which would establish parity with the parking section of the IRS Tax Code at up to \$235 a month. The current parking benefit for 2015 is at up to \$250 a month. The current transit benefit is set at up to \$130 a month. By slightly lowering the parking benefit according to a "Score" by the Joint Committee on Taxation, the bill can achieve benefit parity at up to \$235 a month.

A difference from last year's bill is Republican support by Members of Congress in long distance train/bus commuter District's in Illinois and New Jersey.

The bill awaits action in the House Committee on Ways and Means.

Meetings

- Rep. Mark DeSaulnier (D-Calif.) concerning MTC's Federal Agenda.

Steve Heminger attended the following meetings:

- Rep. Jared Huffman (D-Calif.).
- Homer Carlisle, Staff Member, Senate Committee on Banking, Housing, & Urban Affairs.
- Chris Bertram, Chief of Staff, House Transportation & Infrastructure Committee.
- Therese McMillan, Acting Administrator of the Federal Transit Administration.
- DeLania Hardy, Executive Director, Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations.

Coming and Going

- Senator Barbara Mikulski (D-Md.), the longest serving woman in the history of Congress, announced she would not seek re-election in 2016.