

A Sweeping Vision of a Better Transportation Future

Posted on [July 22, 2013](#) by [Mitchell Beer](#)



When U.S. Transportation Secretary Anthony Foxx was sworn in earlier this month, he expressed a bedrock principle that we hope will be embedded in the 2014 transportation reauthorization bill.

“Transportation is the best example of what one generation can do for the next,” [he said](#), recalling that the Department of Transportation played “a critical role in revitalizing the city” when he served as mayor of Charlotte, North Carolina.

“Over the long term, we must draw on every ounce of innovation and creativity” to build a strong, effective transportation system, the Secretary added. During the same ceremony, Vice President Joe Biden acknowledged that “we’re well behind the curve in terms of what needs to be done” on transportation funding.

We’re the Beneficiaries

Secretary Foxx and Vice President Biden were both looking to the future, but their comments could just as well have been taken as a history lesson. The chronology of the global tolling industry has been a story of transportation visionaries who’ve seen how they could build a path to prosperity for years and decades to come.

In the United States, that investment began with the [original turnpike authorities](#) that formed from the 1930s through the 1950s, and continued with the construction of the Interstate highway system from the 1950s through the 1970s.

The system is in crisis today because our generation has not made infrastructure funding a priority, allowing funding to lag rather than maintaining and improving the surface transportation network. Toll facilities are living proof that an adequately-funded road, bridge, or tunnel operates safely and efficiently. But the rest of the system, to borrow the Vice President’s phrase, is “well behind the curve.”

What We Want for Our Children

The tone we heard at Secretary Foxx’s swearing-in summed up the future that every generation expects for the next. Particularly if we’re parents, but even if we’re not, most of us want to hand the next generation a future that is happier, easier, safer, more prosperous, more peaceful than the present.

But in recent years, there’s been quite a bit of consternation that the march of progress has stalled, and transportation is a portfolio where that sense of loss is painfully obvious. IBTTA



members know the litany: the depletion of the Highway Trust Fund, the erosion of gas tax revenue, the congestion and safety problems that are markers of a system in decline.

And, lurking just around the corner, the [multi-billion-dollar estimates](#) for rebuilding the Interstate highway system.

We're Here to Help

A sweeping vision of a better future is the first essential component of a comprehensive solution to the transportation infrastructure crisis. But high principles and aspirations can get badly tripped up when legislators try to fund them. That's why it will be important for IBTTA members to deliver a clear, concise, persistent message during the transportation reauthorization process.

With more than 5,000 miles of toll facilities in nearly three dozen U.S. states, tolling has earned its place as an important funding option in the transportation toolbox. We have a year to make the case for the flexibility state and local governments need to expand tolling when they see fit to do so. So let's fire up the engines and get started. Because future generations are watching.

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Tolling Points

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