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Shuster Unsure On Highway Funding Plan

by [Jim Watts](#)

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DALLAS -- Rep. Bill Shuster, chairman of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee tasked with developing the next highway funding bill, is taking a careful look at two proposals to bolster the sagging Highway Trust Fund.

Shuster, R-Pa., said at first glance he is encouraged by President Obama's \$302 billion, four-year plan that includes a \$65 billion supplement to the HTF and a tax reform plan by Rep. David Camp, R-Mich., that would redirect \$126.5 billion to it over eight years.

"The American people need to start hearing those things from you, from the president, from other areas to know that we've got to figure out how to do this to make the investments to keep our country competitive," Shuster said during a keynote speech to a Washington briefing sponsored by the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials.

Shuster said he has not had the opportunity to study's President Obama's proposal or the one from Camp, chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee.

"I heard what he said, but I haven't looked at the details yet," he said of Obama's highway plan.

"We're still trying to digest what chairman Camp has out there, but we've still got some time," Shuster said. "Again, I'm very encouraged." Talking to reporters after his speech to AASHTO, Shuster said was glad to see the attention the plight of the HTF is getting.

"The President and the chairman are both figuring out how to solve the trust fund situation," Shuster said.

A transportation funding bill should be ready for committee consideration before Congress' August recess, he said.

Sen. Barbara Boxer, D-Calif., chairman of the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee, said Wednesday she expects to have a reauthorization measure to her committee by summer and possibly as early as April.

Shuster said he hopes to develop a highway funding bill with a longer span than the two-year

Moving Ahead For Progress in the 21st Century measure adopted in 2012. The spending bill will expire at the end of fiscal 2014 on Sept. 30.

Shuster's hope for a multi-year spending plan is also the wish of U.S. Transportation Secretary Anthony Foxx, who spoke to the AASHTO conference earlier Thursday.

Foxx said the four-funding program outlined by President Obama in St. Paul would let state transportation departments to plan ahead for major projects.

The two-year time frame of the current funding measure is not sufficient, he said.

"Projects can't get done under a cloud of uncertainty," Foxx said. "It's a challenge for project sponsors to make long-term plans when Washington gives them short-term funding solutions."

A bipartisan majority in Congress seems to be serious about reaching an agreement on a long-term road bill, Foxx said.

The highway account of the HTF may be depleted before fiscal 2014 ends, he said.

State highway departments may not be able to renew construction contracts as early as mid-summer due to curtailed reimbursements from the HTF, Foxx said.

"We estimate that 700,000 jobs hang in the balance," he said.

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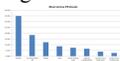
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