



Foxx: Obama transportation bill would protect environment



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Transportation Secretary Anthony Foxx said Tuesday that President Obama's proposed \$302 billion transportation funding bill will help protect the environment in addition to boosting federal spending on road and transit projects.

Obama has sent a **four-year, \$302 billion** infrastructure funding proposal to Congress as lawmakers are weighing a renewing of a surface transportation bill that is scheduled to expire in September.

Foxx said Tuesday that the measure, known as the Grow America Act, would have benefits for the environment as well as the nation's commuter.

"It's no secret to Fast Lane readers that the GROW AMERICA proposal I sent to Congress earlier this spring has a number of elements that will improve the way our transportation system helps people and freight get where they need to go safely and efficiently," Foxx wrote in a **blog post** on the Department of Transportation's website.

"I'm also happy to share that GROW AMERICA has a number of features that would improve the environmental sustainability of American transportation," the DOT chief continued. "The GROW AMERICA Act protects the environment, helps cut carbon pollution by increasing the efficiency of the transportation system and encourages transportation choices that ease congestion on our highways and improves the quality of life in our communities."

The Obama administration has pushing a series of executive actions on climate change to revive an effort to pass a law to curb carbon emissions that stalled in President Obama's first time.

The DOT has put in place a requirement that automakers increase the average gas mileage of their car fleets to 54.5 miles-per-gallon by 2025. Additionally, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) released high-profile new rules that call on power plants to **cut** their carbon emissions 30 percent by 2030.

Republicans have criticized the power plant rules as an attack on coal producing states like Kentucky and West Virginia, which are both home to key Senate and House campaigns this year.

Foxx cast the transportation bill as an extension of the Obama administration's effort to address climate issues.

"Since day one, this Administration has worked to protect our environment and mitigate the effects of climate change," he wrote. "Last week's All-of-the-Above report and yesterday's EPA proposal to cut carbon emissions at America's power plants are two more steps toward the sustainability our nation needs to achieve. If passed, GROW AMERICA would be another step down the road to a greener economy and healthier communities."

Despite the environmental benefits Foxx was touting Tuesday, Obama's transportation proposal is mostly an effort to address a shortfall in federal transportation that is expected to occur as early as August without congressional action.

The Department of Transportation's Highway Trust Fund has been forecasted to go bankrupt by the end of the summer.

The traditional source of funding for the transportation trust fund is revenue that is collected from the federal gas tax, which is currently priced at 18.4 cents-per-gallon.

Obama is proposing that lawmakers increase annual transportation spending from approximately \$50 billion per year to about \$75 billion. The gas tax, which is also expire if the transportation bill is not renewed this summer, only brings in approximately \$34 billion per year however.

The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) has projected that lawmakers would need an extra \$100 billion in addition to the expected gas tax revenue to have enough money to pay for a six-year transportation, which is longer than Obama's proposal and the length that is being sought by the Senate and infrastructure advocates.

The Obama administration is suggesting that lawmakers approve a shorter measure to increase the amount of money that is spent annually on roads and bridges. The president's proposal calls for using approximately \$150 billion from a corporate tax reform proposal that is unlikely to be approved this year to help pay for the transportation project.

Republicans have balked at the idea of using money corporate tax reform, instead releasing a proposal to use money from cuts at the U.S. Postal Service to pay for a one-year extension of the current transportation bill.

Democrats and transportation and Post Office labor groups have vigorously opposed the House GOP's proposal.

TAGS: Anthony Foxx, Barack Obama, Climate change policy, Department of Transportation, Highway Trust Fund shortfall, Gas Tax, MAP-21 Reauthorization

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