



# AFL-CIO to Congress: Don't settle for highway stopgap



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By Keith Laing - 07/15/14 10:23 AM EDT

The AFL-CIO is warning Congress not to rest on its laurels about a likely deal to temporarily extend federal transportation funding into next spring.

The House is scheduled to **vote** Tuesday on a \$10 billion transportation funding package that is similar, but not identical to a measure that has begun moving in the Senate.

The measures are intended to prevent a bankruptcy in transportation funding that has been predicted to occur next month absent congressional action.

AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka said Tuesday that he was glad Congress was moving to prevent the bankruptcy, but he added that he wanted them to focus on passing a long-term transportation bill.

"Congress is heading toward a much needed, albeit short-term, fix for the Highway Trust Fund," Trumka said in a statement.

"But let's be clear: while a short-term extension averts the immediate crisis, it is not a solution," he continued. "Rather, it delays finding a real solution to a serious and unresolved economic crisis. Instead of punting to the next Congress, our leaders should use the short window they have this year to put in place a real bi-partisan, multi-year solution to pay for the vital infrastructure we need."

Democrats has **pushed** for a shorter transportation funding extension that would have lasted only until the end of the year to allow them to push for a multiyear bill during the lame duck session that will follow the November elections.

The AFL-CIO and other infrastructure advocates have been pushing for an increase in the federal gas tax that is used to help pay for transportation projects.

The tax, which is currently priced at 18.4 cents per gallon, has been the traditional source of revenue for transportation spending since the 1950s. The tax has been stagnant since 1993, however, and it has struggled to keep pace with infrastructure expenses as cars have become more fuel efficient in recent years.

Budget analysts have projected that the Highway Trust Fund will run short by about **\$16 billion** per year if Congress does not approve a long-term bill to replenish it.

The gas tax brings in about \$34 billion per year, but the federal government currently spends approximately \$50 billion annually on road and transit projects. Transportation advocates have said that the current funding level is the minimum that can be spent to maintain the present state of the nation's infrastructure network.

Conservative groups in Washington have argued that federal transportation spending should be cut back to the amount of money that is brought in by the gas tax at the very least.

Some groups, like the Heritage Action and the Club for Growth, have called for **eliminating** federal transportation funding and transferring more responsibility for roads and bridges to state and local governments.

The House is likely to vote on its transportation funding proposal on Tuesday afternoon.

**TAGS: AFL-CIO, Highway Trust Fund, Gas Tax, MAP-21 Reauthorization**

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