



## DOT celebrates Mass Transit Act 50th anniversary



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The Department of Transportation (DOT) is celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of the 1965 Urban Mass Transit Act on Wednesday as Congress is debating the future of present transportation funding.

The legislation, which was signed by former President Lyndon Johnson, established the agency that is now known as the Federal Transit Administration, officials with the transportation department said.

“Fifty years ago, Congress and President Johnson took action to bolster our nation’s public transit systems at a time when more and better transportation choices were desperately needed in America’s cities,” current Transportation Secretary Anthony Foxx said in a statement.

Foxx used the occasion to push Congress to approve President Obama’s \$302 billion transportation bill that has languish since being sent to the hill by the administration in the spring.

“Today, with transit ridership growing nationwide—in urban, suburban, and rural communities alike—our GROW AMERICA Act is another historic opportunity to usher in a new era for public transportation,” the DOT chief said.

Lawmakers are in the midst of a **standoff** over federal transportation funding that is threatening modern day public transit funding.

The Department of Transportation has said that its Highway Trust Fund, which also helps fund transit projects, will **run out of money** next month unless Congress approves a new transportation funding bill.

Approximately 20 percent of the revenue that is collected for the Highway Trust Fund is set aside for transit projects.

The traditional source of funding for the Highway Trust Fund has been the 18.4 cents-per-gallon federal gas tax. But the tax has been stagnant since 1993 and it has struggled to keep up with infrastructure expenses as cars have become more fuel efficient in recent years.

Deputy Federal Transit Administrator Therese McMillan said the 1965 transit bill showed what can happen when lawmakers approve investments in transportation projects.

“Over the last half century, we have seen the enormous benefits of federal investments in public transportation in cities from Boston to San Diego, in rural communities from Nebraska to Missouri—all of which spur billions of dollars in economic development and create much-needed transportation choices,” McMillan said in a statement. “Continued investments in public transportation will create jobs, revitalize communities, and create new opportunities for hard-working families.”

The current transportation funding bill, which authorizes the collection of the gas tax, is scheduled to expire in September.

The transportation department has said that it will begin **cutting back** on payments to state and local governments on Aug. 1 unless Congress reaches an infrastructure funding deal.

**TAGS: Anthony Foxx, Federal Transit Administration, Highway Trust Fund, Gas Tax, MAP-21 Reauthorization**