



February 5, 2008
RTAC FEDERAL AGENDA CRITERIA

The RTAC federal agenda should primarily support the organizational goal of expanding the level of resources available statewide for rural transportation infrastructure. While much of that agenda will likely be broad in nature, support of specific transportation projects may occur under certain conditions outlined below.

PROTECTING EXISTING RESOURCES

In addition to expanding resources, RTAC should be concerned with maintaining existing federal resources that the State already receives. Clearly, the solvency of the federal Highway Trust Fund fits into that category as a decline in federal transportation dollars would greatly diminish overall transportation investment. As the reauthorization of SAFETEA-LU approaches, RTAC should steer reauthorization away from emphasizing programs that are not priorities in Arizona and would likely involve reallocating higher levels of funding to such programs.

EXPANDING EXISTING RESOURCES

Steering federal priorities in a direction consistent with Arizona's needs should also be encouraged. In particular, increased resources and policies that promote the movement of freight are important nationwide but would also potentially alleviate the congestion and maintenance challenges particularly along Arizona's interstates. Allocating federal resources for new construction will continue to be a priority for Arizona and other fast growing states.

IDENTIFYING AND SECURING NEW, NON-TRADITIONAL FEDERAL FUNDING SOURCES

RTAC should engage in finding creative new ways for the federal government to fund transportation. Efforts to promote more private investment in transportation infrastructure such as federal tax incentives for rail capital improvements or greater authority/incentives for public/private partnerships should be encouraged. Finding non-traditional federal funding sources such as steering homeland security and border control funding towards transportation infrastructure should also be explored.

SPECIFIC TRANSPORTATION PROJECTS:

In regards to specific projects, the RTAC agenda should not include measures that are in direct competition with other rural Arizona projects for funding. In addition, all individual projects should demonstrate strong merit with significant statewide or regional benefit and, at a minimum, strong regional support from the COG and/or MPO. The position of the Arizona Department of Transportation concerning a specific project should also be considered.

Promoting federal funding for specific projects is consistent with the goal of expanding statewide resources provided that the funding request is a grant application or an appropriation for new money that would otherwise not be directed to the State through formula allocations. Earmarks and/or appropriations that would be deducted from formula funding that is already dedicated to Arizona should not be supported by RTAC.

As long as Arizona continues to receive less back from the Highway Trust Fund than is collected, appropriations and grant requests help to level the allocation inequities that currently exist with the federal distribution formula.