

Sheryl: Okay, Hello today we have Scott Bogren, the communications lead at the Community Transportation of America. Welcome Scott.

Scott: Hey, Sheryl how are you?

Sheryl: So we have Scott here today because he is a legislative expert and he is going to talk a little bit about what has been going on in Congress and the passage of the new transportation reauthorization bill and the continuation of MAP-21 for a while longer.

Scott: Thank you Sheryl, it is rare that anybody would call me an expert in anything so I appreciate that. We have been watching closely what Congress has been doing is really on two fronts one is the motion of the authorizing all surface transportation legislation which is currently know as MAP-21 but just as important watching how the reacting to the crisis funding levels that are currently in the high grade trust funds and how they have been attempting to shore up and add additional revenues into the highway trust fund as soon as possible and those kind of dual actions have been what Congress has been doing the last really three months what ended up being really focused activity last week.

Sheryl: And this new legislation [goes] up until May in 2015 and that includes both the highway trust fund infusion of money and MAP-21?

Scott: Yes, basically what happened at the end of last week first of all it happened at the end of last week because Congress and the House and the Senate were on recess for the month of August and the first week of September. So they had kind of a hard deadline that they were working on to get things done and so what we saw happen is, you are correct, they extended MAP-21 to the end of May, for May 31st 2015 and in doing so they came fund and some revenue patches to keep the program whole.

And that is an important distinction to make so there is not enough money coming in from the gas tax to pay for highways and the highway program and then secondarily fall there wouldn't be enough money to pay for the transit part of the trust fund. But the high way trust fund was finding itself in rough shape sooner. So had they not acted at the end of last week then there would have been, there would have been, throughout the month of August a series of actions that the US DOT would have taken to what is called a cash management strategy really designed to slow the amount of money leaving the trust fund.

So two things: They extended MAP-21, which was a very, it is a clean extension of that legislation. So there are no changes, and they fund at current funding levels and then they came up with some revenue sources to be able to do that.

Sheryl: So what does this mean for mobility managers, for transit, for small community transportation programs in terms of their projects and their planning?

Scott: Well it does not give you a lot to plan on. It is a good perspective or a good lens to look at this through and it is kind of as in all things it is kind of a, use the bad cliché, is a dual-edged sword. On the one hand it is an extension, they can't come, they being Congress they have been unable to really come up with a permanent or a long solution to getting and infusing the trust

fund with revenues. So once again we are in these budgetary gimmicks. One of the things that they use is something that only Congress would come up with, is called "pension smoothing," which is probably a very kind way of saying something that is not so good.

So what they are doing they are extending it. We don't know what will happen at the end of May; so from a planning perspective it is difficult to plan beyond that. We don't know if a six-year bill will emerge in the spring in April, in May of 2015, when ideally the 105th Congress, the next Congress, because we have got an election in November and they sit down and really take a close look at this. Will they want to do something or will they have other reasons to extend it once again?

And so from a lens of mobility managers, smaller transit operators [continuation] is the positive side of this whole funding the way it is today. There is a negative side that a more long-term solution, the sustainable solutions that we all want to see, we all want to see is proving highly elusive for this Congress.

Sheryl: So I am hearing two things. I am hearing, (1) at the next election it is very important in terms of transportation because those who are in Congress will determine what happens as of May 2015 in terms of legislation going forward at that point. And (2) because it is a good chance we will still have Congress that isn't great at crafting solutions together, that what goes on in different State Houses will be very important as it has been in the last couple of years.

Scott: Yes indeed, elections are important and, if you did not think so, understand that the way things change and the way the election plays out will have a significant impact, on (1) whether or not they chose to actually take up and try to do something with surface transportation policy and then (2) what they would do to it.

And so, absolutely, and the other point is the one that is very well taken. Last week Senator Lee from Utah, one of the amendments that he brought was to devolve all surface transportation funding to the states, and not involve the federal government. And it did not pass by a pretty healthy margin, but that idea remains out there. And trust me the more that we see, many states now are looking and they are seeing we can't see the federal government to increase its investment in surface transportation, so we are going to go out and do this ourselves.

We are both here in Washington DC, in Maryland, Virginia, Pennsylvania, there are a number of other states that have basically gone that route. You add to that the concept that three quarters of the transit ballot initiatives prevail. By that I mean valid initiatives where people are asked to either continue or asked to start a new tax or continue an old tax designed for transit.

We win three quarters of those around the country, so we are seeing states seek to solve the problem on their own. We are seeing local units of governments and states and regions as well through the ballot initiatives try to solve the problem and some of that is going to play right into the concept that some here in Congress feel which is yes, these are state and local issues: These are not [federal issues]; we don't need to come up with any federal dollars [and] we let them decide, make priorities.

We here at CTAA, we do not feel that that is good public policy; that in fact the long term partnership between states, locals and a strong federal investment in the program is what has

built the program to what it is today. And the program I mean road, bridges, public transit, all forms of surface transportation have done very well under that partnership We don't want to see that partnership left behind.

Every time the bill gets extended, every time we move down the road without any additional funding, it is not like the need that the demand for more transit money [goes away], the need to buy new busses purchase, new facilities and build new facilities, the need for road construction and bridge construction and maintenance of all these projects. That demand, it increases and it will have to happen sooner or later and it only gets more expensive the more times we kick this down the road.

Sheryl: So Scott, do you have any advice for those who are working locally regionally and at the state level for what they should be doing to see that we have support in Congress and support at state houses?

Scott: Definitely, first and foremost, it is a good time to be having this discussion, not only because we just saw kind of an end to a certain part of the game here in DC with the passage of HR 5021. More importantly all members of the House have an election in November and a good number of Senators have an election in November and they are all home in their districts right now on a district work period and also on a recess.

It is a perfect time for mobility managers, transit managers, transit leaders, advocates those groups to go out and talk with these elected officials at the local level and explain to them what transit really does and what it means in their communities. And I say that because CTAA next week will be launching just such a tool, a card [for] community transportation, what access needs. And it is a card that really breaks down the work mobility managers and transit systems and advocates do. There are on four categories [on the card]: employment and health care, which we call the "what we do," and then "how we do it" is housed under the terms affordability and innovation.

We provide in this card the national perspective on those four categories and we leave blank for you to fill out, for hopefully folks listening here in the podcast to fill out, what their local perspective is on employment and health care in affordability and innovation; and then we urge you to use these cards as the basis for [discussions with] elected officials, with the members of your House [member], with your Senator, with their staffers, while they are all home in the district in the month of August. We have created some momentum as we worked on this; let's not subside. Let us use this month of August to further, so that is what they can do, is educate and advocate so that they know what is at stake. These elected officials, there are no earmarks anymore; they have no tangible means in many cases really understanding that transit program; they don't understand the benefits it creates; they don't understand that people get to work; they don't understand all the efficiencies that mobility management brings to this system. We have got to tell them. We have got to tell them and we have got to teach them and we have got to reach out and do that. And CTAA next week will be launching a system tool that helps do that.

Sheryl: Okay and looking for one last piece of advice, is there a way to include people in the community and riders and partners of transportation providers and transit to also weigh in and influence elected officials?

Scott: Absolutely, the card is designed to be used by anyone. First of all, but most importantly, that kind of thinking is what we need. We need mobility managers to be talking to and highlighting the outcomes that they create through mobility in their communities and we have got to get out of this theory that we are just, we are transit, so fund us.

Well that is not getting us anywhere. We actually have to better describe what it is we create in communities and not just to talk about rides and passengers per hour, but we need to talk about people who are employed, people who can remain independent in their homes, people that avoid emergencies.

[We have to explain] things that really have financial tangible, financial benefits to the communities and to taxpayers that speak more to about what we create as transit professionals and the outcomes. So absolutely, I agree with you that bringing along local employers and local business men and local human service agents, all the folks and places that benefit from transit need to be speaking out now on why they need investment in transit, so they (Congress) are not hearing this message only from transit advocates and mobility managers. But we also, we need them to be hearing from the people who benefit from the services.

Sheryl: Well okay Scott, thank you very much for taking the time today to speak with me.

Scott: Not a problem at all Sheryl. It was a pleasure and if anybody out listening to the podcast wants more information on any of this, please go to CTAA's website at [ctaa.org](http://ctaa.org) and for the latest on all this kind of federal information, if you want to follow my twitter feed at CTMag1, you will get all the latest information on transit legislation and policy as it happens.

Sheryl: Okay and when I post this podcast I will include those resources.

Scott: Excellent

Sheryl: Okay, thanks so much and have a great day.

Scott: You too Sheryl, thank you; bye bye.