Alaska lawmakers are considering asking voters to create a state infrastructure fund that would help pay for airport, road and other projects around the state. Meanwhile, Connecticut and Kansas are among the states with similar trust funds that are looking to prevent future raids on those funds when times are tight. I also have my usual weekly round-up of items this week on the future of the Highway Trust Fund and MAP-21 reauthorization, state activity on transportation revenues, public-private partnerships, and multi-modal strategies being employed in various states and communities around the country.

Transportation Trust Funds & Lockboxes

Alaska State Rep. Peggy Wilson, who was an attendee at our Transportation Policy Academy in Washington, DC last year, is the main sponsor of a resolution that seeks to amend Alaska’s Constitution to create the Alaska Transportation Infrastructure Fund. If the legislature approves the measure, it would go before the voters in November. Wilson’s resolution passed the House Finance Committee last week, Coast Alaska News reported.

But it looks like two companion bills, which would have set up the fund and made a special $2 billion appropriation for it, will have to wait for another day. The bills have not been scheduled for further hearings this session and Wilson has said she only expects the constitutional amendment resolution to make it through.

“We understand this is not the year to ask for $2 billion,” she said. “Even in a year with abundant revenue, this would be difficult. This endowment could be a lesser sum with the idea of adding to the endowment when our saving accounts are more flush.”

Two other states that already have similar funds are looking at how to protect transportation dollars from being spent for other budget purposes in the future.

Lawmakers in Kansas expressed concern recently that an estimated $2 billion has been diverted from the state’s transportation fund over the past several years.

“If that didn’t happen, we would have our big projects down here already completed,” said Sen. Jacob LaTurner at a recent meeting with residents in Pittsburg, Kansas, KOAM-TV reported. “I think we have to work hard as a legislative body to protect transportation funds.”

Lawmakers in Connecticut, meanwhile, passed a new law in June which puts that state’s Special Transportation Fund into a lockbox that can’t be used for anything but transportation projects. Hundreds of millions of dollars have been diverted from the fund in recent decades to pay for other things. The new law, however, doesn’t kick in until next year and in the meantime, another $118 million in transportation funds have been budgeted for diversion. That, in addition to concerns about the price of upgrades to the Metro-North New Haven Line, is prompting some to call for a constitutional amendment to put additional force behind the lockbox concept, The Stamford Advocate.
Twenty-one other states have constitutional lockboxes to protect transportation funds.

“There needs to be a lockbox in place so whether it is us or someone in the future, we prevent the funds from being taken,” said state Rep. Tony Guerrera.

Some lawmakers however expressed concern that such a constitutional amendment would lead to others that would undermine the power of the legislature to make decisions according to changing circumstances and priorities.

“In a lot of states they decide to put lots of issues to referendum, and ultimately it begins to make it tough to govern,” said state Sen. Carlo Leone.

There is more about the history of raids on the fund, the lockbox legislation and the proposed Constitutional Amendment in another earlier article from The News Times.

Highway Trust Fund & MAP-21 Reauthorization

- Supply Chain Brain has posted a podcast with Joshua Schank, President & CEO of the Eno Center for Transportation, in which he talks about various funding ideas for shoring up the Highway Trust Fund and the feasibility of each one.
- House Speaker John Boehner says he won’t dust off his 2011 proposal to use oil drilling revenue for infrastructure when the House considers a successor to MAP-21 this year, The Hill reported.

State Activity on Transportation Revenues

- **California:** In a recent piece for Fox & Hounds Daily, the president of the California Foundation for Commerce and Education Loren Kaye offers several finance options she says state policymakers could employ to reinvest in the state’s infrastructure. Among them: increasing the fuel excise tax, increasing the vehicle license fee, easing the vote requirements for local sales tax overrides for transportation, expanding the network of toll roads, and devising a new tax/fee on mileage driven.
- **Delaware:** News Journal columnist Harry Themal expressed support for Gov. Jack Markell’s proposed 10-cent gas tax increase in a recent column, writing that legislators expressing doubts about the plan or opposing it “are shedding crocodile tears.”
- **Iowa:** Keith Goble of Land Line magazine wrote recently about the transportation funding solutions under consideration in the state. Legislative initiatives include a rerouting of some state sales tax revenues, various types of general fund transfers and a phased-in, 10-cent-per gallon gas tax increase.
- **Massachusetts:** The state Senate this week approved a bill authorizing $13 billion in capital spending over the next five years to pay for transportation system upgrades, the Associated Press reported.
- **Michigan:** Some in Gov. Rick Snyder’s administration are hoping an abundance of potholes in the state this season is putting the state’s deteriorating infrastructure in the spotlight and making it more likely lawmakers will approve more transportation funding this year, The Detroit News reported. Meanwhile, Pennsylvania DOT’s executive deputy secretary Bradley Mallory was in Michigan this week to speak at a session hosted by the County Road Association on how the Keystone State passed its transportation funding package last year, the Associated Press reported.
- **New Hampshire:** The Senate Ways & Means Committee on Wednesday voted to endorse a 4.2 cent increase in the state’s gas tax, the New Hampshire Union Leader reported. Sen. Jim Rausch, the bill’s chief sponsor, is expressing optimism that the measure will clear the full Senate and House after a provision to index the tax to the CPI and trigger future automatic increases was
removed.

- **Utah:** The House Transportation Committee this week passed two bills aimed at raising more money for highways, *The Salt Lake Tribune* reported. One measure would index the state’s gas tax to gasoline prices at the pump. The other would allow the Utah DOT to sell limited ads at rest stops and on its online traffic app.

- **Washington:** *The Redmond Reporter* had an interview recently with Washington Transportation Secretary Lynn Peterson in which she talked about her department’s reform plan, state transportation funding and other issues.

- **Wisconsin:** In a recent op-ed for the *Journal-Sentinel*, a spokesman for the Alliance for Toll-Free Interstates writes that the ongoing debate in Madison about toll roads is distracting legislators from the challenge of providing long-term, sustainable transportation funding.

- **Wisconsin:** The National Association of Counties has issued a new report that finds that “federal and state funding for county transportation projects is increasingly inadequate.” Among the report’s other findings: “Counties face the dilemma of rising costs of transportation projects, increasing traffic volumes and limitations on their ability to generate revenue.” Also: “Counties have adopted additional funding and financing mechanisms, but they are not sufficient to cover the needs of their businesses and residents.”

**Public-Private Partnerships**

- The U.S. House Transportation & Infrastructure Committee’s Panel on Public-Private Partnerships met this week for a hearing on the role of P3s in highway and transit projects. Among those testifying was James Bass, Interim Executive Director and CFO at the Texas Department of Transportation. You can read his written testimony here and watch the full hearing here.

- **Colorado:** Hot on the heels of a deal with a private consortium to invest in a stretch of U.S. 36 between Denver and Boulder and collect tolls, state transportation officials say more P3s could be on the horizon for I-70 through Denver and C-470 in Douglas County, the *Associated Press* reported.

- **North Carolina:** Gov. Pat McCrory and Transportation Secretary Anthony Tata both expressed support for broadening the state’s use of P3s to finance transportation projects at a recent conference, *The Charlotte Observer* reported.

**Multi-Modal Strategies**

**Transit**

- **Bus Rapid Transit** gets the spotlight in recent articles about successful BRT in Cleveland, a proposed BRT route in Nashville and another proposed for Provo, Utah. *Al Jazeera* reported this week on a campaign to provide the disabled with better access to public transportation.

- **Indiana:** Competing House and Senate versions of a measure to allow five counties to raise individual income taxes with voter approval to fund more transit in central Indiana are headed to a conference committee, where four lawmakers will try to iron out a compromise, *the Indianapolis Business Journal* reported this week.

- **Massachusetts:** The Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority’s plan to sell naming rights to its T stations in the Boston area didn’t yield any takers, *the Boston Business Journal* reported. [31]

- **Oregon:** The Portland-Milwaukie Light Rail Bridge, which attendees of our Transportation Policy Academy in Portland got to see under construction last July, took another step towards completion this week, *Oregon Public Broadcasting* reported.

- **Pennsylvania:** State transportation officials are keeping an eye on a regional partnership between
two public transit systems in hopes that it can be a model for collaboration among other agencies around the state, Berks County Television reported [34].

Active Transportation

- **Pedestrian Deaths:** A report from the Governors Highway Safety Association [35] finds that pedestrian deaths fell 8.7 percent in the first six months of 2013 compared to the same period in 2012. The decline followed three years in which pedestrian deaths rose 15 percent from an all-time low in 2009.
- Emily Badger on The Atlantic Cities blog wrote recently about how “America’s Cities Are Still Too Afraid to Make Driving Unappealing.” [36]
- The Guardian [37] recently reported [37] on how many U.S. cities are embracing start-up bike-share programs and examined the issue of whether they can survive without taxpayer assistance in the absence of commercialization.
- **Alaska:** Smart Growth America recently took a look [38] at complete streets strategies being employed in The Last Frontier.
- **California:** Politico Magazine [39] this week took a look at whether Los Angeles could ever be anything other than a driving town.
- **Florida:** A measure filed in the state legislature would impose a second-degree misdemeanor charge on any motorist who commits a moving violation that causes serious bodily harm to a “vulnerable road user” (identified as pedestrians, road workers, those on bikes, motorcycles, scooters, mopeds or animals, and those operating farm equipment, skateboards, in-line skates, horse-drawn carriages, wheelchairs, etc.), CBS Miami reported [40]. Another measure in the legislature, which has already seen some success, would make it a second-degree felony (rather than a third-degree felony) and carry the potential revocation of a driver’s license for a motorist who fails to remain at the scene of a crash involving serious bodily injuries.
- **Indiana:** The New York Times [28] reported [28] this week on how a new bike/ped path in Indianapolis is helping residents and visitors alike view the city in a new way and providing a boost to the economy.
- **Oregon:** A bike-share system for Portland could be delayed again as a result of the bankruptcy of bike-supplier Bixi and other factors, The Atlantic Cities blog reported [41].
- **Virginia:** Bike legislation was passed over in the Senate Transportation Committee this week, The Washington Post [42] reported [42]. Sen. Creigh Deeds, who chairs the panel, cited concerns from state police about the difficulty of enforcing the legislation.

Aviation

- **Florida:** Gov. Rick Scott this week announced $194 million in state funds will be designated for improvements at Tampa International Airport, The Tampa Tribune [43] reported [43].

Ports

- The American Association of Port Authorities says President Obama’s $3.9 trillion budget proposal would cut funding for port-related programs too deeply, even while it calls for an increase in infrastructure spending overall, The Hill [44] reported [44].
Alaska Considers Creating Transportation Trust Fund; Other States Seek Protect Existing Ones

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