



# The United States Conference of Mayors

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## **America's Mayors Say No More Bridges To Nowhere: Oppose Gas Tax Unless More Is Invested in Metro Areas to Rebuild Roads and Bridges and Expand Transit**

### ***Atlanta Mayor Kasim Reed Speaks at National Press Club***

(Washington, D.C.) – The United States Conference of Mayors (USCM) today released a 176-city survey focusing on local transportation infrastructure investments at the National Press Club.

Atlanta (GA) Mayor Kasim Reed, USCM Transportation Committee Chair, delivered the survey findings. Given the economic problems facing the nation, mayors believe it is more important than ever that federal transportation priorities be targeted to metropolitan areas -- home to two-thirds of U.S. residents.

“As the federal government sets priorities for long-term spending and deficit reduction, future transportation infrastructure investments should focus spending on pressing metropolitan transportation infrastructure needs as opposed to low-priority highway expansion projects such as the infamous Bridge to Nowhere,” said Atlanta Mayor Kasim Reed.

“The long-term productivity of transportation infrastructure spending is greater when it is invested where economic growth will occur, which is in the metropolitan areas,” said Reed.

Among the major findings of the United States Conference of Mayors Metropolitan Transportation Infrastructure survey (to read entire survey, go to [usmayors.org/transportationsurvey](http://usmayors.org/transportationsurvey)):

- Ninety-eight percent of the mayors point to investment in affordable, reliable transportation as an important part of their cities' economic recovery and growth.
- Ninety-three percent of the mayors urge reforms in federal transportation programs to allow cities and their metropolitan areas to receive a greater share of federal funds directly.
- Absent a greater share of funding directly to cities and metropolitan areas, only seven percent of the mayors indicate support to increase the federal gas tax.<sup>1</sup>
- Ninety-six percent of the mayors believe that the federal government should increase spending on transportation infrastructure to reverse decades of underinvestment in cities, with strong majorities indicating support to increase the federal gas tax to improve transportation infrastructure, if a greater share of the funding were invested in local road and bridge infrastructure (89%), and public transit (65%).
- Seventy-five percent of the mayors indicate support to increase the federal gas tax if a greater share of the funding were invested in bicycle and pedestrian projects.

- Eighty percent of the mayors indicate that highway expansion should be a low priority.
- Seventy-five percent of the mayors say a national infrastructure bank or expanded availability of federal financing tools such as Transportation Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (TIFIA) or Build America Bonds would accelerate or increase the number of transportation projects that could be implemented.

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*The United States Conference of Mayors policy does not support an increase in the federal gas tax without reforms and programs in the reauthorization of the federal surface transportation law that are metropolitan-focused, more energy-efficient, and more environmentally sustainable.*

In the United States, metropolitan areas account for 86 percent of employment, 90 percent of wage income, and over the next 20 years, 94 percent of the nation's economic growth, but they are burdened with the nation's worst traffic jams, its oldest roads and bridges, and transit systems at capacity. Simply put, these areas are receiving significantly less in federal transportation investments than would reflect their role and importance to the nation's economy.

Tom Cochran, USCM CEO and Executive Director underscored this point. "The largest metropolitan areas account for 87 percent of the nation's traffic. The three most congested areas - Los Angeles, New York, and Chicago - account for 27 percent of that traffic. Our metropolitan areas rank high among world economies, but they are saddled with bus and rail systems at capacity and aging roads and bridges that will undermine their ability to meet the nation's future economic output. Given these factors, metropolitan areas should be at the center of federal transportation infrastructure investment. They are the drivers of the 21<sup>st</sup> century United States economy."

Cochran went on to say, "This survey confirms what mayors have been saying for years: through a new direct partnership with mayors, the federal government should make tomorrow's transportation infrastructure more metropolitan-focused, more energy-efficient, and more environmentally sustainable."

The United States Conference of Mayors is pleased to be working with the Obama Administration and Congress in helping to shape a federal surface transportation law that will rebuild transportation infrastructure in metropolitan areas, reduce traffic congestion, create jobs, and ensure that cities and their metropolitan economies across the United States, and, in turn, the nation's economy, emerge from the recession.

The President and CEO of Parsons Brinckerhoff, which sponsored the survey, spoke to the global benefit of increased infrastructure investments in this country.

"While the United States has been disinvesting in transportation infrastructure, we see other countries taking a cue from our history by making significant investments in transportation," said Parsons Brinckerhoff President and CEO George J. Pierson.

"Today, we are investing approximately two percent of our GDP on infrastructure; Europe and China are investing approximately five percent and nine percent, respectively. Growth in India, China, Brazil and other surging economies is being fueled in part by investment in transit systems, roads, airports and other infrastructure. Thousands of miles of high-speed rail systems are being built in Europe and Asia, connecting population and economic centers."

"When mayors in the United States speak to their need to improve the quality of roads and transit systems in their cities, they are responding to a public need in a way that will arm their cities for success in global competition," concluded Pierson.

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*The U.S. Conference of Mayors is the official nonpartisan organization of cities with populations of 30,000 or more. There are 1,1210 such cities in the country today, each represented in the Conference by its chief elected official, the Mayor. Find us on [facebook.com/usmayors](https://www.facebook.com/usmayors), or follow us on Twitter at [twitter.com/usmayors](https://twitter.com/usmayors).*

