

October 17, 2014

GAO Looks at Better Tracking of Highway Trust Fund Project-Spending

Dear Transportation Committee Member:

On October 9th, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) issued a report which concluded the U.S. Department of Transportation (DoT) should explore whether they can do a better job of tracking aggregate project-level spending on transportation projects.

The GAO's auditors stated that four separate entities within the DoT receive funding from the Highway Trust Fund (HTF) for the programs and policies under their jurisdiction – the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), and the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA). Of these four, the FHWA receives some four-fifths of the funding provided from the HTF. The GAO was asked to look at how dollars in the HTF were being utilized “to help ensure that sound choices and investment decisions about future funding are made.”

In their review, the GAO stated that regarding the FHWA, the agency can collect data on project segments, but “does not collect and report aggregate project-level data for the majority of projects on a routine basis.” According to the GAO, this type of data “would allow the FHWA to track and report the total overall obligations of an entire project.” The GAO notes that while the FHWA is able to keep track of “aggregate obligations” on projects exceeding \$500 million, it does not do so on others. The GAO estimates that these “other” projects account for nearly 90 percent of FHWA's spending. The FHWA states that it can track this information, but at an added cost to the states. This cost has not been determined.

The GAO recommended that the FHWA “explore the costs, feasibility, and options for collecting and publicly reporting consistent aggregate project-level spending data.” The GAO added that doing so could help FHWA in its oversight efforts as well as putting

together consistent and reliable data that can be shared with Congress and the general public on how the HTF is employed.

For a copy of the GAO Report, please [CLICK HERE](#).

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