

# Successful Government Relations/Public Relations Teams

Communicating the Importance of  
Infrastructure Investment

AAPA , Savannah, GA

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# Overview

- A Quick Tour of AASHTO
- AASHTO's Policy Development & Issue Advocacy Processes and Programs
- Current Policy Issues
- Policy Advocacy – The Messages and PR Action Plan

# AASHTO: A Quick Tour

- A nonprofit association founded in 1914
- Members include:
  - Highway and transportation departments of the 50 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico
  - Associate Members from Federal, State, and Local transportation and resource agencies and other countries
- Covers all transportation modes
- Mission:
  - Provide technical services; and
  - *Advocate for effective national transportation-related policies*

# AASHTO's Policy Development & Issue Advocacy Processes and Programs



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# Policy Development & Advocacy: An overview

**AASHTO issue advocacy involves two steps --**

Determining “what” we  
advocate

- Policy Development  
Process

Deciding “how” we say  
it

- Public Affairs, Polling  
and Messaging

# The Policy Development Process

## What we Advocate



# AASHTO Standing Committees

## By Mode:

- Aviation
- Highways
- Public Transportation
- Railroads
- *Water Transportation*

## By Topic Area:

- Environment
- Finance/ Administration
- Planning
- Quality
- Research
- Safety

# AASHTO 2011 Action Plan

- Surface Transportation
- Highway Trust Fund
- Innovative Finance
- Performance
- FAA Reauthorization
- High Speed & Intercity Passenger Rail
- **Maritime & Water Resources**
- Stormwater Management
- Wetlands Guidance & Rules





# Current Surface Transportation Policy Issues

- **Funding and Finance**
- **Reform**
- Performance
- Energy and Climate Change
- Transportation Sustainability and Livability
- **Freight**
- Intercity Passenger Rail

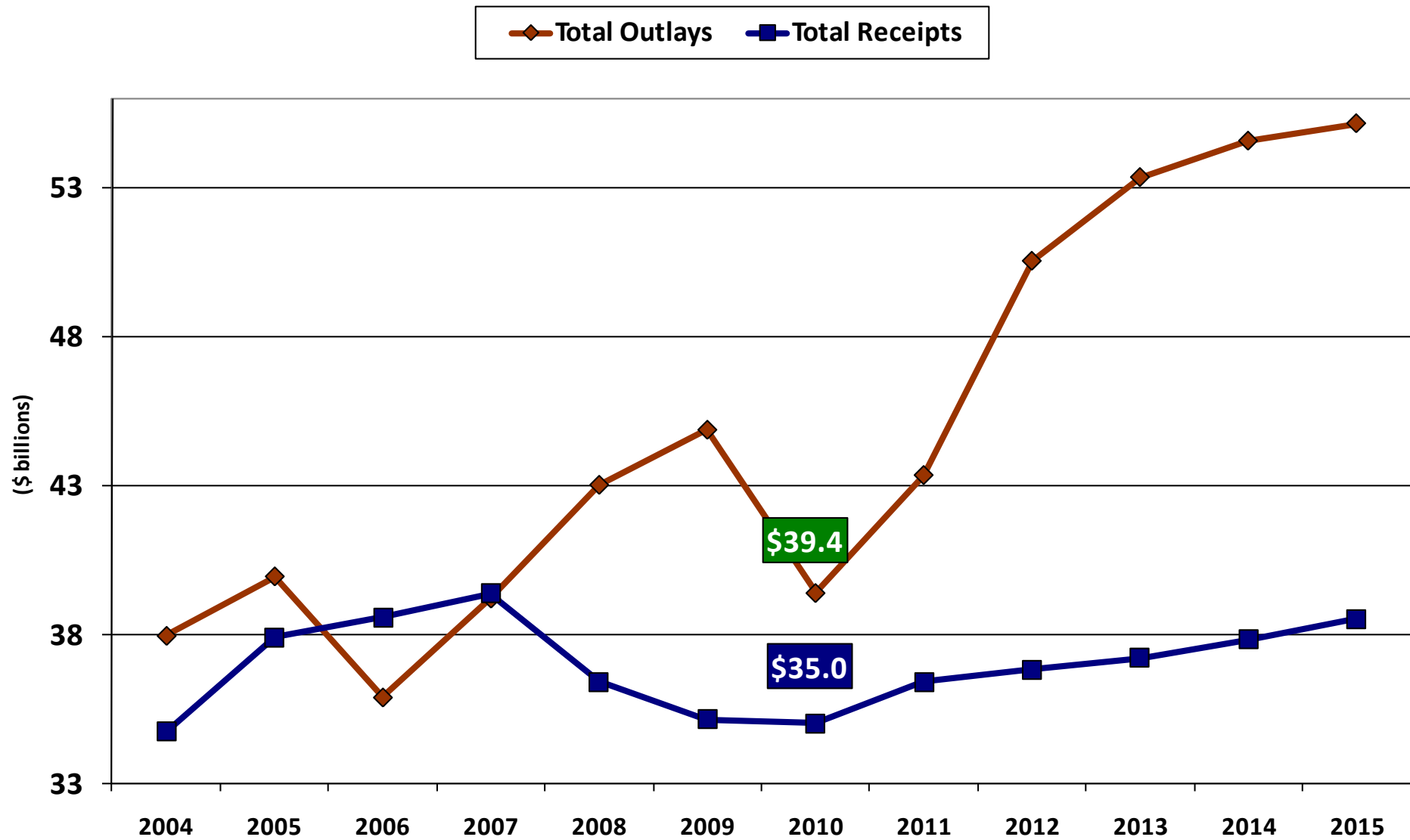


# Surface Transportation Funding and Finance

## *America at a Crossroads*

- The Current State of the Highway Trust Fund is Poor
- The Bill for Surface Transportation Needs is Past Due
- The Congress of the U.S. is stalemated on moving forward
- Firewalls and Funding Guarantees
- The Future Federal Role in funding surface transportation is unclear

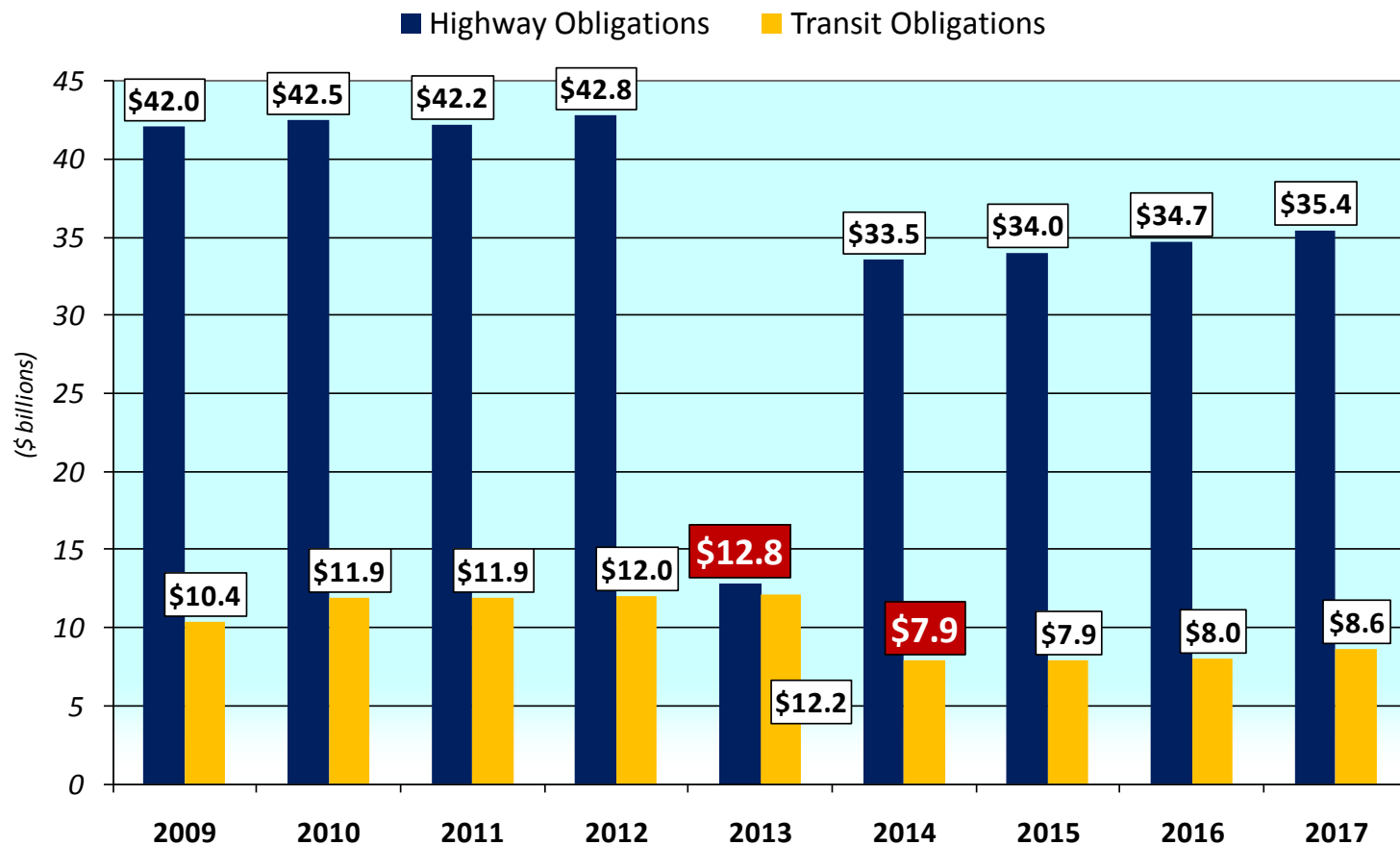
# Highway Trust Fund: Receipts and Outlays Discrepancy



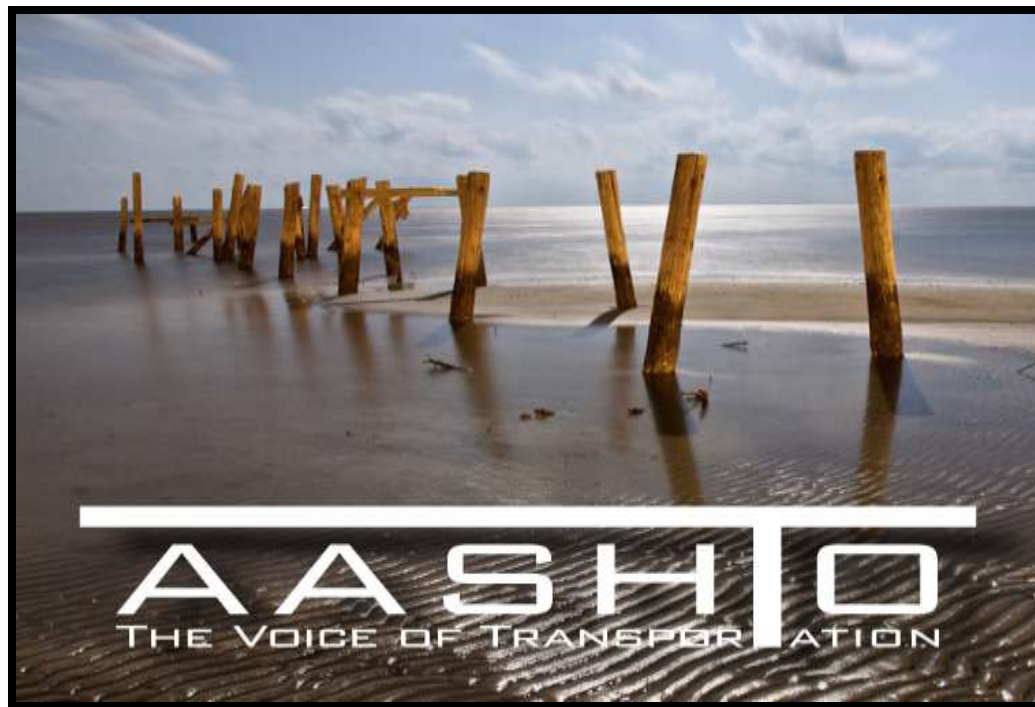
Note: Excludes \$8.017 billion transfer from General Fund to Highway Account of HTF in September 2008; \$7 billion transfer from General Fund to Highway Account of HTF in August 2009; \$19.5 billion transfer from General Fund to Highway and Mass Transit Accounts of HTF in March 2010.

# Program will have to be cut by half in 2012, if revenue is not added

## Estimation of Federal Highway and Transit Obligations Through 2017 Based on Current Trust Fund Revenues



# Policy Advocacy: The Messages and PR Action Plan



# Putting it All Together: The Messages

- Developing tools and resources that member states can use to influence “grass tops”
- Connecting and showcasing the benefits of what we do to the consumer (not what we say, it’s what they hear).
- Emphasizing research such as polling or focus groups.
- Using and promoting “words that work” – a set of words and phrases that resonate with our target audiences.

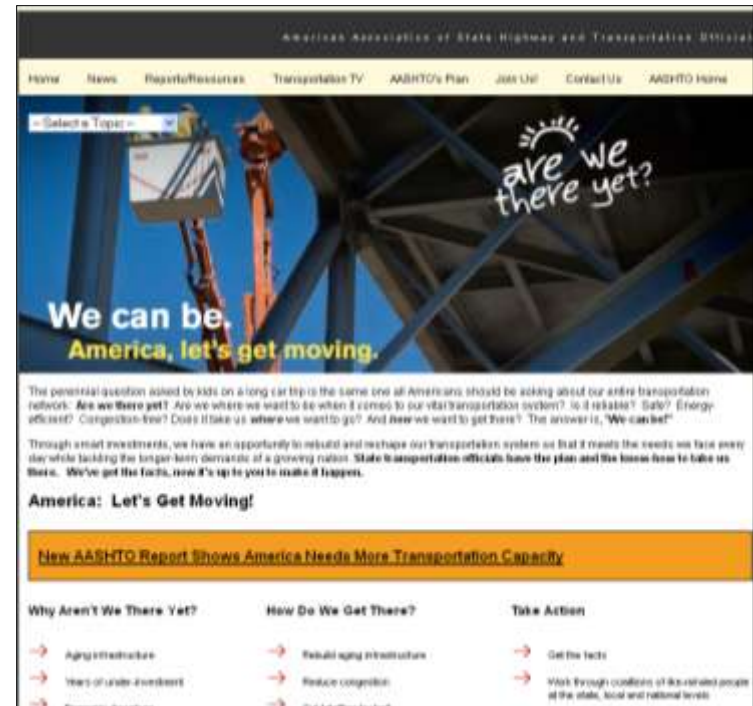
# Implementing an Action Plan

## AASHTO's Recess Campaign

- Key Recess Messages: We need a multi-year transportation bill passed this year that includes:
  - Flexibility that enables states to get the most value for each dollar
  - Changes in law so we can deliver projects faster
  - Financial tools as a supplement to our dollars

# Are We There Yet?

- 2008-2010: National marketing campaign focused on motivating “grass tops” decision makers
- Campaign toolkit
- Web site with key messages, talking points
- Meetings, speeches, events
- Series of reports: Freight, road and bridge conditions, connectivity issues.



The screenshot displays the AASHTO website's campaign page. At the top, the navigation menu includes Home, News, Reports/Resources, Transportation TV, AASHTO's Plan, Join Us!, Contact Us, and AASHTO Home. The main banner features a construction site with a crane and a sign that reads "are we there yet?". Below the banner, the text states: "We can be. America, let's get moving." A paragraph follows, posing the question: "The perennial question asked by kids on a long car trip is the same one all Americans should be asking about our entire transportation network: Are we there yet? Are we where we want to be when it comes to our transportation system? Is it reliable? Safe? Energy efficient? Congestion-free? Does it take us where we want to go? And how we want to get there? The answer is, 'We can be!'" Another paragraph explains: "Through smart investments, we have an opportunity to rebuild and reshape our transportation system so that it meets the needs we face every day while tackling the long-term demands of a growing nation. State transportation officials have the plan and the know-how to take us there. We've got the facts, now it's up to you to make it happen." Below this is a section titled "America: Let's Get Moving!" with a sub-header "New AASHTO Report Shows America Needs More Transportation Capacity". A table summarizes the campaign's key messages:

Why Aren't We There Yet?	How Do We Get There?	Take Action
→ Aging infrastructure	→ Rebuild aging infrastructure	→ Get the facts
→ Years of under-investment	→ Reduce congestion	→ Work through conflicts of jurisdiction across all the state, local and national levels
→ Poor connectivity	→ Cut dollars for fuel	



# Expanding Communications Tools to Raise Awareness

- Special Reports
- “I Told Congress” & Other social media efforts
- News releases, media relations
- iPhone app

twitter

facebook



**AASHTO**  
THE VOICE OF TRANSPORTATION

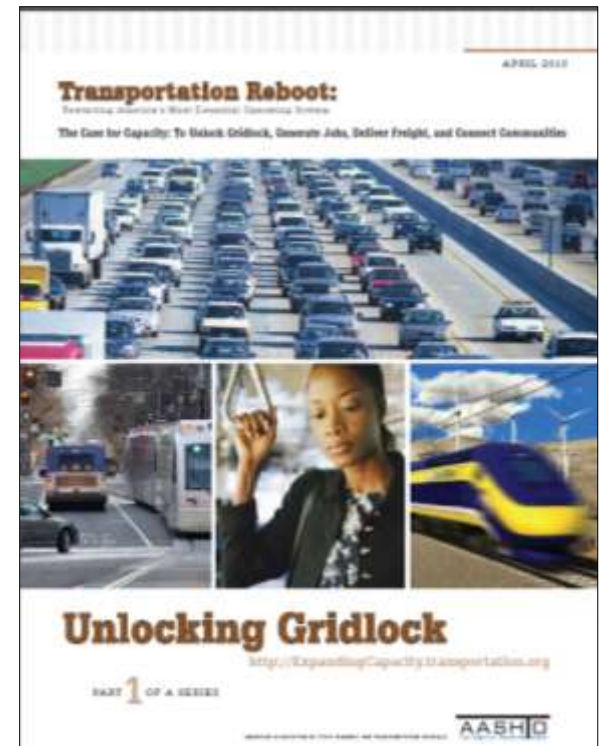
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APRIL 2011

**Transportation Reboot:**  
Reversing America's Worst Economic Stimulus Scheme

The Case for Capacity: To Unlock Gridlock, Generate Jobs, Deliver Freight, and Connect Communities

**Unlocking Gridlock**  
<http://ExpandingCapacity.transportation.org>

PART 1 OF A SERIES

AASHTO

# For more information ...



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