Successful Government Relations/Public Relations Teams

Communicating the Importance of Infrastructure Investment
AAPA, Savannah, GA
June 22, 2011

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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
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

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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

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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

Highway Obligations

Transit Obligations

($ billions)
Policy Advocacy:
The Messages and PR Action Plan
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

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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.
Expanding Communications Tools to Raise Awareness

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

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