## Obama Doesn’t Push

### 2ac Obama Doesn’t Push

#### Recent transportation bill proves Obama doesn’t push

Laing, 7/6 (Keith, 7/6/2012, “Primary opponent hits Rep. Mica for attending White House signing ceremony,” <http://thehill.com/blogs/transportation-report/highways-bridges-and-roads/236497-rep-sandy-adams-criticizes-rep-john-mica-on-highway-bill>, JMP)

Mica has also sharply criticized President Obama for his role in the transportation talks, but he has called the bill that Obama is scheduled to sign on Friday "the most important transportation reform bill since Eisenhower."

After attending Obama signing of the bill, Mica released a scathing statement criticizing the president for being "AWOL" on transportation issues.

“I’m disappointed that the only part the president and his administration played in passage of this important transportation legislation has been today’s elaborate bill signing ceremony," Mica said in a statement released minutes after he was standing next to Obama at the White House.

#### True for most major issues too during this administration

Klein, 12 (2/6/2012, Ezra, “Obama: The most polarizing moderate ever?” <http://www.washingtonpost.com/business/economy/obama-the-most-polarizing-moderate-ever/2012/02/06/gIQAXsV0uQ_story.html>, JMP)

DW-Nominate rates presidents by processing Congressional Quarterly’s “Presidential Support” index, which tracks roll-call votes on which the president has expressed a clear position. The system then rates the president by looking at the coalitions that emerged in support of his legislation. In essence, it judges the president’s ideology by judging the ideology of the president’s congressional supporters. So how, in an age of incredible congressional polarization, could this system rank Obama as a moderate?

There are a few answers. One, says Poole, is that Obama is very careful about taking positions on congressional legislation. In the 111th Congress, he only took 78 such positions. Compare that with George W. Bush, who took 291 positions during the 110th Congress, or Bill Clinton, who took 314 positions during the 103rd Congress. So part of the answer might be that, with the exception of high-profile bills such as health-care reform, Obama is hanging back from most of the congressional squabbling.

### 1ar Obama Won’t Push

#### Obama won’t get involved --- reduces the chance of passage

Nance 12 – (Scott, Editor and Publisher of The Washington Current, “Partisan Sniping Infects Even The Bipartisan Transportation Bill,” The Democratic Daily, 2/15/2012, Lexis) SIyer

Last fall, Democrats and Republicans on the Senate Environment and Public Works (EPW) Committee together linked arms to unanimously approve a new federal transportation bill. The committee’s liberal chairwoman, Sen. Barbara Boxer (D-Calif.) and conservative ranking Republican, Sen. James Inhofe of Oklahoma, alike cheered the ability of the legislation, known as S. 1813, to put Americans back to work nationwide. Sadly, that Kumbaya moment just couldn’t last. Now that it’s moved from committee to the Senate floor, even this rare bill to achieve extraordinary bipartisan support has fallen victim to partisan sniping. Boxer complained Monday about an effort by Republican senators to introduce controversial, unrelated amendments to the highway bill, which would authorize the government to spend $109 billion over two years on roads, bridges and other transportation infrastructure. “We’re trying to get out of this recession. This is a jobs bill that’s just waiting to happen. We have myself and Senator Inhofe as partners in this effort. We want to get to this highway bill,” she says. “Listen, we have to put aside these wedge issues, these ‘gotcha’ issues. We have business after business after business that is struggling. This is a bipartisan bill. This will save 1.8 million jobs and create an additional million jobs.” Meanwhile, Inhofe himself was busy making sure President Obama couldn’t take any credit for the transportation bill, if it were to pass. “The bottom line is that **the** President’s involvement is detrimental **to our bipartisan efforts**. **Whenever the President gets involved in transportation infrastructure, he turns it in to a partisan, political issue**,” Inhofe says. “Remember back to his $787 billion failed stimulus bill, the one he claimed was an infrastructure bill? Despite all of his talk, only 3% went for infrastructure, 3% went for defense, and the rest went to liberal social engineering.”

#### Obama doesn’t push transportation legislation – extension bill proves.

Hanscom, 12(Greg, “President Obama and the forgotten urban agenda,” Grist, January 17th 2012, <http://grist.org/cities/president-obama-and-the-forgotten-urban-agenda/>)//AS

Leinberger is among the many observers who are dismayed at the politicization of transportation and smart growth issues — and at the president’s soft-pedaling on the issues. “The most disappointing thing that the administration has not done,” he says, “is that it has not passed a new transportation bill.”

The transportation bill is a gargantuan piece of federal legislation that funds road, bridge, and rail projects nationwide — and has huge implications for the way cities and suburbs grow. Unable to agree on a new direction, Congress has punted on the issue for the past two years, passing resolutions that simply extend the old policy — a policy that encourages sprawling suburban growth.

“That’s a lack of leadership coming out of White House,” Leinberger says. “President Obama spent too much political capital on high-speed rail instead of looking at light rail, street cars, and the entire range of transportation alternatives.”

### **Boxer/Mica/InHofe Push**

#### Congressional leaders empirically push transportation issues --- most recent bill proves

**Barbaccia 7/2** – (Tina, Staff Writer, “House, Senate pass $105 billion, two-year transportation bill,” 7/2/12, http://www.equipmentworld.com/house-senate-pass-105-billion-two-year-transportation-bill/) SIyer

The House and Senate on June 29 passed a new two-year $105 billion surface transportation reauthorization bill, Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century (MAP-21), the AASHTO Journal reports. The measure, H.R. 4348, passed the House 373-52, just before the June 30 expiration of the ninth extension of SAFETEA-LU. The Senate passed the bill 74-19, according to the AASHTO Journal report. Kirk Steudle, Michigan Department of Transportation director and AASHTO president, is lauding “the leadership” of House Speaker John Boehner (R-Ohio) and Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-Nev.) “for encouraging agreement on a bipartisan bill that will bring us 27 months of much needed funding certainty and program stability,” according to report. In an official statement after the measure passed the House and Senate, Boehner said: “This bill is far from perfect, but it is a substantial improvement over the original Senate highway bill and I’d like to thank Chairman Mica and our negotiators for all their hard work in making this agreement happen.” Lisa Carson, marketing manager for KPI-JCI and Astec Mobile Screens, echoed these sentiments. Carson also noted that the “measure is far from perfect,” [but] it gives our contractors and dealers the stability they need to continue their operations and provide jobs to millions of Americans. As an American manufacturer, we know that this bill will help stimulate equipment sales, which will be used to fix our crumbling roads and bridges.” Rep. John Mica (R-Fla.), the chairman of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee calls the bill “the jobs bill for the 112th Congress.” Mica says, “The unprecedented reforms in this legislation — cutting red tape, truly making projects ‘shovel ready,’ shrinking the size of the federal bureaucracy, attracting more private sector participation, and giving states more flexibility to address their critical priorities — will ensure that we more effectively move forward with major highway and bridge improvements and put Americans back to work.”

#### Boxer successfully pushes

Freemark 3/15 (Yonah, Writer for the Transport Politic, “The Senate’s Transportation Program,” Transport Politic, 3/15/12, http://www.thetransportpolitic.com/2012/03/15/the-senates-transportation-program/) SIyer

The U.S. Senate’s passage of a transportation reauthorization bill Wednesday was big news, if only because it has now been 898 days since the last transportation bill officially expired. Three years of debates in both houses of the Congress have brought us one proposal after another, but only one piece of legislation has actually made it out the doors of one of the chambers. **That is a serious accomplishment for** Barbara **Boxer’s leadership in the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee.**

Senate Bill 1813, also known as MAP-21 (“Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century“), is a $109 billion law that will remain in effect for 18 months if it is passed by the House. It reorganizes several national transportation programs and includes a number of interesting features, some of which I describe later in this piece.

Of course, the specific policy measures of MAP-21 may be meaningless despite the bill’s 74-22 passage margin, which included about half of the GOP contingent in the Senate; House Republicans have suggested that they have little interest in moving forward with this bipartisan legislation. Current funding for transportation runs out on March 31st; at that point, if nothing happens at the Capitol, collection of fuel taxes and distribution of transportation funding from Washington to the states will cease. What seems most likely is yet another extension of the existing transportation bill, originally passed in 2005 but now woefully out-of-date and underfunded.

## Political Capital Bad

### 2ac Political Capital Fails

#### Presidential push backfires and reduces the chance of passage --- empirical

Klein, 12 (Ezra, “THE UNPERSUADED Who listens to a President?” The New Yorker, March 19th, 2012, <http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2012/03/19/120319fa_fact_klein?currentPage=1)//AS>

Obama, too, believes in the power of Presidential rhetoric. After watching the poll numbers for his health-care plan, his stimulus bill, his Presidency, and his party decline throughout 2010, he told Peter Baker, of the Times, that he hadn’t done a good enough job communicating with the American people: “I think anybody who’s occupied this office has to remember that success is determined by an intersection in policy and politics and that you can’t be neglecting of marketing and P.R. and public opinion.”

The annual State of the Union address offers the clearest example of the misconception. The best speechwriters are put on the task. The biggest policy announcements are saved for it. The speech is carried on all the major networks, and Americans have traditionally considered watching it to be something of a civic duty. And yet Gallup, after reviewing polls dating back to 1978, concluded that “these speeches rarely affect a president’s public standing in a meaningful way, despite the amount of attention they receive.” Obama’s 2012 address fit the pattern. His approval rating was forty-six per cent on the day of the speech, and forty-seven per cent a week later.

Presidents have plenty of pollsters on staff, and they give many speeches in the course of a year. So how do they so systematically overestimate the importance of those speeches? Edwards believes that by the time Presidents reach the White House their careers have taught them that they can persuade anyone of anything. “Think about how these guys become President,” he says. “The normal way is talking for two years. That’s all you do, and somehow you win. You must be a really persuasive fellow.”

But being President isn’t the same as running for President. When you’re running for President, giving a good speech helps you achieve your goals. When you are President, giving a good speech can prevent you from achieving them.

In January, 2004, George W. Bush announced his intention to “take the next steps of space exploration: human missions to Mars and to worlds beyond.” It was an occasion that might have presented a moment of bipartisan unity: a Republican President was proposing to spend billions of dollars on a public project to further John F. Kennedy’s dream of venturing deep into the cosmos. As Frances Lee, now a professor at the University of Maryland, recalls, “That wasn’t a partisan issue at all. Democrats had no position on sending a mission to Mars.” But, she says, “they suddenly began to develop one. They began to believe it was a waste of money.” Congressional Democrats pushed the argument in press releases, public statements, and television appearances. In response, the White House, which had hinted that the Mars mission would feature prominently in the State of the Union address, dropped it from the speech
The experience helped to crystallize something that Lee had been thinking about. “Most of the work on the relationship between the President and Congress was about the President as the agenda setter,” she says. “I was coming at it from the perspective of the increase in partisanship, and so I looked at Presidents not as legislative leaders but as party leaders.” That changes things dramatically. As Lee writes in her book “Beyond Ideology” (2009), there are “inherent zero-sum conflicts between the two parties’ political interests as they seek to win elections.” Put more simply, the President’s party can’t win unless the other party loses. And both parties know it. This, Lee decided, is the true nature of our political system.

To test her theory, she created a database of eighty-six hundred Senate votes between 1981 and 2004. She found that a President’s powers of persuasion were strong, but only within his own party. Nearly four thousand of the votes were of the mission-to-Mars variety—they should have found support among both Democrats and Republicans. Absent a President’s involvement, these votes fell along party lines just a third of the time, but when a President took a stand that number rose to more than half. The same thing happened with votes on more partisan issues, such as bills that raised taxes; they typically split along party lines, but when a President intervened the divide was even sharper.

One way of interpreting this is that party members let their opinion of the President influence their evaluation of the issues. That’s not entirely unreasonable. A Democrat might have supported an intervention in Iraq but questioned George W. Bush’s ability to manage it effectively. Another interpretation is that party members let their political incentives influence how they evaluate policy. “Whatever people think about raw policy issues, they’re aware that Presidential successes will help the President’s party and hurt the opposing party,” Lee says. “It’s not to say they’re entirely cynical, but the fact that success is useful to the President’s party is going to have an effect on how members respond.” Or, to paraphrase Upton Sinclair, it’s difficult to get a man to support something if his reëlection depends on his not supporting it.

Both parties are guilty of this practice. Karl Rove, President Bush’s deputy chief of staff, recalls discussing the Social Security privatization plan with a sympathetic Democrat on the House Ways and Means Committee. He says that the representative told him, “You wouldn’t get everything you want and I wouldn’t get everything I want, but we could solve the problem. But I can’t do it because my leadership won’t let me.” Rove says, “It was less about Social Security than it was about George W. Bush.” At various times during the nineteen-nineties, Clinton and other Democrats had been open to adding some form of private accounts to Social Security, and in 1997 there were, reportedly, quiet discussions between Democrats and Republicans about doing exactly that. In theory, this background might have led to a compromise in 2005, but Bush’s aggressive sales pitch had polarized the issue.

### 1ar Political Capital Fails

#### Presidential involvement risks issue polarization – hinders passage

Klein, 12 (Ezra, “THE UNPERSUADED Who listens to a President?” The New Yorker, March 19th, 2012, <http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2012/03/19/120319fa_fact_klein?currentPage=1)//AS>

The Obama Administration was taken by surprise when congressional Republicans turned against the individual mandate in health-care reform; it was the Republicans, after all, who had championed the idea, in 1993, as an alternative to the Clinton initiative. During the next decade, dozens of Senate Republicans co-sponsored health-care plans that included a mandate. Mitt Romney, of course, passed one when he was governor of Massachusetts. In 2007, when Senator Jim DeMint, of South Carolina—now a favorite of the Tea Party—endorsed Romney for President, he cited his health-care plan as a reason for doing so.

Senator Orrin Hatch, of Utah, who supported the mandate before he opposed it, shrugs off his party’s change of heart. “We were fighting Hillary care,” he has said, of the Republicans’ original position. In other words, Clinton polarized Republicans against one health-care proposal, and then Obama turned them against another.

Representative Jim Cooper, a Democrat from Tennessee, takes Lee’s thesis even further. “The more high-profile the communication effort, the less likely it is to succeed,” he says. “In education reform, I think Obama has done brilliantly, largely because it’s out of the press. But on higher-profile things, like deficit reduction, he’s had a much tougher time.”

Edwards’s work suggests that Presidential persuasion isn’t effective with the public. Lee’s work suggests that Presidential persuasion might actually have an anti-persuasive effect on the opposing party in Congress. And, because our system of government usually requires at least some members of the opposition to work with the President if anything is to get done, that suggests that the President’s attempts at persuasion might have the perverse effect of making it harder for him to govern.

If speeches don’t make a difference, what does? Another look at the Presidencies of Franklin Roosevelt and Ronald Reagan offers an answer. Roosevelt was one of only two Presidents in the twentieth century whose parties won seats in a midterm election. That was in 1934—a year in which the economy grew by ten per cent. But in the midterms of 1938, the year after the economy plunged into a double-dip recession, the Democrats lost seventy-two seats in the House. If Roosevelt had been running for reëlection, he, too, would almost certainly have lost.

#### **Election will only reinforce partisanship**

Washington Post, 12 ([Chris Cillizza](http://www.washingtonpost.com/chris-cillizza/2011/02/24/AB7OmvI_page.html) and [Aaron Blake](http://www.washingtonpost.com/aaron-blake/2011/05/23/AFPeNbAH_page.html), “Obama: The most polarizing president. Ever,” Washington Post, January 30th, 2012, [http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/the-fix/post/obama-the-most-polarizing-president-ever/2012/01/29/gIQAmmkBbQ\_blog.html)//AS](http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/the-fix/post/obama-the-most-polarizing-president-ever/2012/01/29/gIQAmmkBbQ_blog.html%29//AS)

President Obama ran — and won — in 2008 on the idea of uniting the country. But each of his first three years in office has marked historic highs in political polarization, with Democrats largely approving of him and Republicans deeply disapproving. For 2011, Obama’s third year in office, an average of 80 percent of Democrats approved of the job he was doing in Gallup tracking polls, as compared to 12 percent of Republicans who felt the same way. That’s a 68-point partisan gap, the highest for any president’s third year in office — ever. (The previous high was George W. Bush in 2007, when he had a 59 percent difference in job approval ratings.)

In 2010, the [partisan gap between how Obama was viewed by Democrats versus Republicans stood at 68 percent](http://www.gallup.com/poll/145937/Obama-Approval-Ratings-Polarized-Year-Year.aspx); in 2009, it was [65 percent](http://www.gallup.com/poll/125345/Obama-Approval-Polarized-First-Year-President.aspx). Both were the highest marks ever for a president’s second and first years in office, respectively.

What do those numbers tell us? Put simply: that the country is hardening along more and more strict partisan lines.

While it’s easy to look at the numbers cited above and conclude that Obama has failed at his mission of bringing the country together, a deeper dig into the numbers in the Gallup poll suggests that the idea of erasing the partisan gap is simply impossible, as political polarization is rising rapidly.

Out of the ten most partisan years in terms of presidential job approval in Gallup data, seven — yes, seven — have come since 2004. Bush had a run between 2004 and 2007 in which the partisan disparity of his job approval was at 70 points or higher.

Obama’s ratings have been consistently among the most polarized for a president in the last 60 years,” concludes Gallup’s Jeffrey Jones in a memo summing up the results. “That may not be a reflection on Obama himself as much as on the current political environment in the United States, because Obama’s immediate predecessor, Bush, had similarly polarized ratings, particularly in the latter stages of his presidency after the rally in support from the 9/11 terror attacks faded.”

Our guess is that Jones’ latter hypothesis is the right one — that we are simply living in an era in which Democrats dislike a Republican president (and Republicans dislike a Democratic one) even before the commander in chief has taken a single official action.

The realization of that hyper-partisan reality has been slow in coming for Obama. But in recent months, he seems to have turned a rhetorical corner — taking the fight to Republicans (and Republicans in Congress, particularly) and all but daring them to call his bluff.

Democrats will point out that Republicans in Congress have played a significant part in the polarization; the congressional GOP has stood resolutely against almost all of Obama’s top priorities. And Obama’s still-high popularity among the Democratic base also exacerbates the gap.

For believers in bipartisanship, the next nine months are going to be tough sledding, as the already-gaping partisan divide between the two parties will only grow as the 2012 election draws nearer. And, if the last decade of Gallup numbers are any indication, there’s little turnaround in sight.

### Compartmentalization

#### Congress doesn’t view legislation in terms of trade-off – proves that issues are compartmentalized

Edwards 78 – (Charles, Associate Professor of Political Science @ Texas A & M University, “The President and Congress: The Inevitability of Conflict,” Presidential Studies Quarterly, Summer 1978, JSTOR) SIyer

Not only do members of Congress not usually bring the full range of available views to bear on their decisions on individual policies, but they also are not generally in a position to make trade-offs be tween policies. Because of its decentralization, **Congress usually considers policies serially, i.e., without reference to other policies**. Without an integrating mechanism, members have little means to set and enforce priorities and emphasize the policies with which the President is most concerned. This is especially true, from the President's standpoint, if Congress is controlled by the opposition party, as has often been the case in the post World War II era. In addition, **Congress has little capability to examine two policies**, like education and health care, **in relation to each othe**r. Not knowing that giving up something on one policy will result in a greater return for another policy, **members have little incentive to engage in trade-offs**. The new Budget Committees have a broader focus than other committees and are involved in making some trade-offs between policies and setting some priorities. But they deal only with direct expenditures (and then usually only with increments), not taxes (except for general revenue estimates), tax expenditures, treaties, natural gas deregulation, or a host of other important policies. Moreover, they only recommend general limits on spending, leaving it up to more parochial subject-area committees to go into specifics. The House committee is composed of temporary members whose permanent committee assignments undoubtedly limit the breadth of their focus.

#### Partisanship nullifies Presidential persuasion – congress people vote along party lines.

Klein, 12 (Ezra, “THE UNPERSUADED Who listens to a President?” The New Yorker, March 19th, 2012, <http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2012/03/19/120319fa_fact_klein?currentPage=1)//AS>

Theorists have long worried over this possibility. They note that our form of government is not common. As Juan Linz, a professor of political science at Yale, pointed out in a 1989 paper, “The only presidential democracy with a long history of constitutional continuity is the United States.” A broad tendency toward instability and partisan conflict, he writes, is woven into the fabric of a political system in which a democratically elected executive can come from one party and a democratically elected legislature from another. Both sides end up having control over some levers of power, a claim to be carrying out the will of the public, and incentives that point in opposite directions.

The American system has traditionally had certain features that reduced the stakes—notably, political parties that encompassed a diverse range of opinions and often acted at cross purposes with themselves. But today the parties operate as disciplined, consistent units. According to Congressional Quarterly, in 2009 and 2010 Democrats and Republicans voted with their parties ninety per cent of the time. That rigidity has made American democracy much more difficult to manage—and it has made the President, as party leader, a much more divisive figure.

Edwards, ever the data cruncher, has the numbers to back up this perception. “When President Obama took office, he enjoyed a 68 percent approval level, the highest of any newly elected president since John F. Kennedy,” he wrote in a recent paper. “For all of his hopes about bipartisanship, however, his early approval ratings were the most polarized of any president in the past four decades. By February 15, less than a month after taking office, only 30 percent of Republicans approved of his performance in office while 89 percent of Democrats and 63 percent of Independents approved. The gap between Democratic and Republican approval had already reached 59 percentage points—and Obama never again reached even 30 percent approval among Republicans.”

This, Edwards says, is the reality facing modern Presidents, and one they would do well to accommodate. “In a rational world, strategies for governing should match the opportunities to be exploited,” he writes. “Barack Obama is only the latest in a long line of presidents who have not been able to transform the political landscape through their efforts at persuasion. When he succeeded in achieving major change, it was by mobilizing those predisposed to support him and driving legislation through Congress on a party-line vote.”

That’s easier said than done. We don’t have a system of government set up for Presidents to drive legislation through Congress. Rather, we have a system that was designed to encourage division between the branches but to resist the formation of political parties. The parties formed anyway, and they now use the branches to compete with one another. Add in minority protections like the filibuster, and you have a system in which the job of the President is to persuade an opposition party that has both the incentive and the power to resist him.

Jim Cooper says, “We’ve effectively lost our Congress and gained a parliament.” He adds, “At least a Prime Minister is empowered to get things done,” but “we have the extreme polarization of a parliament, with party-line voting, without the empowered Prime Minister.” And you can’t solve that with a speech.

#### Members of Congress act individually based on their own interests – not their party’s

Edwards 78 – (Charles, Associate Professor of Political Science @ Texas A & M University, “The President and Congress: The Inevitability of Conflict,” Presidential Studies Quarterly, Summer 1978, JSTOR) SIyer

The internal structure of the executive and legislative branches also drives a wedge between the President and Congress. The executive branch is hierarchically organized, facilitating the President's examining a broad range of view points on an issue, weighing and balancing various interests. The hierarchial structure of the executive branch also aids him in viewing the tradeoffs between various policies. Since one man, the President, must support all the major policies emanating from the executive branch, he is virtually forced to take a comprehensive view of the totality of U.S. national policy. Members of Congress, while they technically may act similarly to the President, frequently do not do so. Each house of Congress is highly decentralized, with each member jealously guarding his or her independence and power. The political party structure, which in many countries is a unifying force within the legislature, counts for little in the United States.29 Most members of Congress are self-recruited to their office, gaining their party's nomination by their own efforts, not the party's. Because virtually anyone can vote in party primaries, parties do not have control over those who run under their labels. Moreover, candidates are largely responsible for providing the money and organization for their own election, precluding party control over an other aspect of electoral politics. Once elected to office, there are few effective sanctions available to party leaders to enforce party discipline. What sanctions might be applied, such as poor committee assignments, rarely are because legislators are very hesitant to set precedents which could be used against themselves to hinder their freedom of action. Thus, while the structure of Congress ensures that a diversity of views will be heard and that many interests will have access, it does not follow that each member will hear all the views and see the representatives of each interest. Indeed, the decentralization of Congress almost guarantees that the sum of the information available to it as a whole is not a synthesis of the information available to each legislator. The Congress as a whole does not ask questions, individual members do. Thus, not all members receive the answers. The lack of hierarchy means that there is probably going to be little integration of information on a given issue.

#### Nothing the president does can influence members of congress – each individual has their own agenda

Edwards 78 – (Charles, Associate Professor of Political Science @ Texas A & M University, “The President and Congress: The Inevitability of Conflict,” Presidential Studies Quarterly, Summer 1978, JSTOR) SIyer

In Federalist 46 James Madison wrote "... the members of the federal legislature will likely attach themselves too much to local objects . . . Measures will too often be decided according to their probable effect, not on the national prosperity and happiness, but on the prejudices, interests, and pursuits of the governments and the people of the individual states."1 Thus, he focused on the greatest source of conflict between the President and Congress: their different constituencies. Only the President (and his Vice-Presidential running mate) is elected by the en tire nation. Each member of Congress is elected by only a fraction of the populace. Inevitably, the President must form a broader electoral coalition in order to win his office than any member of Congress. Moreover, two-thirds of the Senators are not elected at the same time as the President, and the rest of the senators and all the House members seem to be increasingly insulated from the causes of presidential victories.2 In addition, the Senate over represents rural states because each state has two senators no matter what its population.3 Thus, the whole which the President represents is different from the sum of the parts which are represented by legislators. Each member of Congress will give special access to the interests, which he or she represents. Their desires will receive special consideration whenever they are at all clear and opposing views are unlikely to be taken seriously, if heard at all.4 Now that the general point about the different constituencies of the President and members of Congress has been made, let us illustrate the consequences of this by looking at the different reactions of the President and Congress to various policies. To elucidate the point further, we shall look at their behavior at different stages of policymaking.

#### Members of Congress vote solely based on ideology – the president has no effect

Poole 07 **–** (Keith, Department of Political Science @ University of California, “Changing Minds? Not in Congress!” Public Choice, June 2007, JSTOR) SIyer

The purpose of this paper is to show evidence that **members of Congress die in their ideological boots**. That is, based upon the roll call voting record, **once elected to Congress, members adopt an ideological position and maintain that position throughout their careers** - once a liberal or a conservative or a moderate, always a liberal or a conservative or a moderate. The exceptions prove the rule - for every Richard Schweiker who went to the mountaintop with Ronald Reagan in 1976 and saw conservatism, or Charles Goodel who saw the true light of liberalism when he switched from the House to the Senate in 1968, there are hundreds of other Senators who never undergo a conversion experience. Ideology is measured by applying a simple spatial voting model to the roll call voting data for the 80th through the 107th Houses and Senates. This spatial model was proposed by Hinich and Ordeshook (Cahoon, Hinich, & Ordeshook, 1976; Ordeshook, 1976; Hinich & Pollard, 1981) and then developed in depth by Hinich and his colleagues (Enelow and Hinich, 1984; Hinich & Munger, 1994, 1997). The model is also discussed at length in Poole and Rosenthal (1997) and Poole (2005), so I will only sketch the basic ideas here. Simply stated, the Hinich-Ordeshook spatial voting model embodies the fundamental insight of Philip Converse (1964) about ideology - or stated in Conversian terms, a belief system - namely, that issues are interrelated or bundled and that ideology is fundamentally the knowledge of what-goes-with-what. In contemporary American politics the knowledge that a politician opposes raising the minimum wage makes it virtually certain that the politician favors a balanced budget, opposes unfunded federal mandates to the states, opposes universal health care, favors ending the entitlement status of welfare, opposes affirmative action, and so on. In short, a conservative and almost certainly a Republican. Converse called this bundling of issues constraint - the ability, based on one or two issue positions, to predict other (seemingly unrelated) issue positions.

# Politics Internal Links --- NEG

## Obama Pushes the Plan

### 2nc General Purpose

#### Presidential involvement and capital key to passage --- empirics

Wolfe, 12 (5/13/2012, Kathryn A. Wolfe, “Nation's potholes need a big fix,” <http://www.politico.com/news/stories/0512/76254.html>, JMP)

The nation’s population is growing at a steady pace, yet infrastructure investments lag. The lifelines of commerce — roads, bridges, runways, ports — are showing their age, and in this era of fiscal austerity it may be a long time before they get rebuilt.

As Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood likes to say, the nation is “one big pothole.”

While Congress may come to terms in conference on patching up the nation’s transportation wounds, there’s no realistic long-term fix waiting in the wings. The problem — as is the case throughout all modes of transportation — comes down to money. The most plausible possibilities to address the deep shortfalls in gasoline tax revenues that fuel the system won’t happen anytime soon. People are driving less or in more efficient cars — and raising the gas tax is a nonstarter in Washington.

The best-case scenario would be little more than a temporary reprieve, leaving Congress until January to start addressing the problem again. And many believe the administration — whoever is in office — will have to lead the way.

“The aspiration is to get a bill that carries us through the end of the next fiscal year, and then in writing hopefully a new multiyear bill in the next administration,” said James Burnley, former transportation secretary under Ronald Reagan, now a partner with Venable. “If the secretary of transportation is willing and able to provide this kind of leadership, it could make a big difference.”

If President Barack Obama retains the White House, his administration will have to step up its involvement in the legislative details of the transportation bill, which some have criticized as lacking.

Obama’s first substantive policy decision related to the transportation bill after taking office was to push for an 18-month extension instead of getting behind then-House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee Chairman Jim Oberstar’s bill. And though the administration has sketched out the bones of a plan in its past few budgets, it has failed to submit a full legislative proposal for the transportation bill.

“I think the administration does need to be one of the key leaders in this. It’s fair to say they haven’t really exerted that kind of effort to this point,” said Jack Basso, director of program finance and management at the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials. “Any bills I’ve dealt with … **the administration was always a key player in there and had to be to bring parties together**.”

#### They are wrong --- Obama does empirically push

InAutoNews 6/26 – (“Senators close to finish transport bill negotiations with House Republicans,” InAutoNews, 6/26/2012, http://www.inautonews.com/senators-close-to-finish-transport-bill-negotiations-with-house-republicans) SIyer

With Congress’s Fourth of July recess looming next week, Senators involved in marathon talks on a two-year deal for funding U.S. road, bridge and rail projects said on Monday they were close to a compromise with House Republicans. Staff talks on the bill extended around the clock over the weekend, California Democrat Senator Barbara Boxer said. “We are on the 1/2 yard line,” Boxer said in urging the lobbyists to contact congressional leaders to push for a deal. “We cannot afford to have any slippage from the progress we’ve been making.” She declined to answer questions about specific agreements, saying negotiations weren’t complete. Party leaders insist that letting the surface transportation funding bill expire is not an option, and President Barack Obama has called repeatedly for passing the measure to ensure continued funding for the hard-hit construction industry amid sluggish economic recovery. Federal funding for transportation projects expires on Saturday. As many as 3 million jobs hinge on the legislation, and failure to pass it would have a direct impact on the economy ahead of the Nov. 6 general election. Last-ditch weekend talks had yielded glimmers of compromise on some sticking points in the proposed two-year, $109 billion package to pay for road, bridge and rail construction.

#### Obama pushes for transportation legislation even if it is an uphill battle

Freemark 12– (Yonah, Writer for the Transport Politic, “The President’s Budget: Full of Ambition, Short on Congressional Support,” Transport Politic, 2/14/12, http://www.thetransportpolitic.com/2012/02/14/the-presidents-budget-full-of-ambition-short-on-congressional-support/) SIyer

The White House has introduced a budget — and a reauthorization proposal — that would significantly increase investment in transportation infrastructure over the next six years. Though the legislation as currently designed will not be passed into law because of reluctance from Congress, the Obama Administration’s continued efforts to expand funding for sustainable mobility options are to be praised.

Over the course of the next six years, the Administration proposes significant expansions in transit and rail spending, increasing those programs from 22.9% of the overall DOT budget for surface transportation in fiscal year 2013 (and 21% in actual spending in FY 2011) to 35.7% of the budget in FY 2018. See table below. Though expenditures on highways would increase significantly as well, it would be in public transportation modes that the real expansion would be made. Significant spending on intercity rail — almost $50 billion over six years — as well as new transit capital projects ($21 billion) and state of good repair (SOGR, at $32 billion) would be the most important contributions of the program.

In addition to revenues from the fuel tax (which no one seems willing to advocate increasing), the White House proposes to pay for its transportation bill by reducing the size of the Overseas Contingency Operations fund, which is used to support armed operations abroad. Because of the decision to pull out of Iraq and Afghanistan, the amount of money needed for this purpose is lessened, and thus the possibility of expanding spending on transportation.

Most of the President’s proposal is unlikely to see the light of day in the House of Representatives, controlled by Republicans newly hostile to the idea of using Highway Trust Fund [revenues to pay for transit projects](http://www.thetransportpolitic.com/2012/02/06/time-to-fight/). Yet their proposal would create a $78 billion funding shortfall in the Highway Trust Fund over the next ten years [according to an analysis by the Congressional Budget Office](http://democrats.transportation.house.gov/sites/democrats.transportation.house.gov/files/HR_7_Rules_Bill_HTF_Run.pdf). That’s with $0 committed to transit! The Administration proposal, on the other hand, is fully funded (or at least accounted for\*) and would transform the Highway Trust Fund into the much more reasonably titled Transportation Trust Fund; the priorities of each piece of legislation are very clear.

The [defection of several House Republicans](http://www.streetsblog.org/2012/02/13/new-york-republicans-join-nadler-defect-from-house-attack-on-transit/) away from their own party’s transportation bill suggests that the legislation may not even get out of their chamber. At this point, the Senate’s bipartisan, mostly status-quo-extending two-year transportation reauthorization bill is now the most likely of all three proposals to be official government policy by the end of the spring. But even it faces the strong possibility of being ditched in favor of a simple extension of the existing bill, which will expire on March 31 according to the current law.

Nonetheless, the Obama Administration’s plans for this expansion in transit funding, which [mirror similar proposals from previous years](http://www.thetransportpolitic.com/2011/02/15/breaking-down-the-department-of-transportations-proposed-2012-budget/), are a reminder of the ambitions for improved transportation that are possible in this country but continue to be derailed by political forces hostile to the idea of investing in the nation’s infrastructure. This is a serious proposal to significantly improve the state of the nation’s rail and bus systems — if we choose to take it.

#### Transportation is a way for Obama to clearly contrast himself from republicans – he has an incentive to fight for new transport bills

Freemark 11– (Yonah, Writer for the Transport Politic, “The White House Stakes Its Political Capital on a Massive Intercity Rail Plan,” Transport Politic, 2/11/11, <http://www.thetransportpolitic.com/2011/02/08/> the-white-house-stakes-its-political-capital-on-a-massive-intercity-rail-plan/) SIyer

Vice President Joe Biden spoke in Philadelphia this morning to announce that the Obama Administration intends to request from Congress $8 billion in federal funds for the advancement of a national high-speed rail system as part of a six-year transportation reauthorization bill.

The White House’s commitment to fast trains has been evident throughout the Administration’s two-year lifespan, beginning with the addition of $8 billion for the mode in the 2009 stimulus bill and continued with $2.5 billion included in the Fiscal Year 2010 budget. Yet this new funding, which would add up to $53 billion over the six-year period, is remarkable for its ambition. It is clear that President Obama’s 2012 re-election campaign, already being framed in terms of “winning the future,” will hinge partially on whether voters agree with his assessment of the importance of investing in the nation’s rail transport infrastructure.

In his speech, Mr. Biden argued that American wealth was founded on “out-building” the competition. Infrastructure, he noted, is the “veins and the arteries of commerce.” The President and his team will be making this case to the American people the next two years, hoping that the public comes to endorse this message of national advancement through construction.

Whether the proposal — to be laid out in more detail with next week’s introduction the President’s full proposed FY 2012 budget — has any chance of success is undoubtedly worth questioning. Republicans have campaigned wholeheartedly against rail improvement projects in Iowa, Ohio, and Wisconsin; even Florida’s project, which would require no operating subsidies once in service, hangs in the balance. But as part of the larger transportation reauthorization legislation, which is apparently slated to move forward by this summer, a real expansion in high-speed rail funding seems possible, especially if Mr. Obama pressures the Democratic-controlled Senate to push hard for it.

Of course, as has become typical whenever anyone has announced new transportation investments, it is not yet clear what specific revenue sources would fund high-speed rail.

The $53 billion down-payment on intercity rail would be the first step in the White House’s goal to connect 80% of the country’s population to the mode in 25 years. Funding would be allocated through two accounts: One would essentially be a New Starts capital expansion fund that would construct new lines and stations; the other would renew the existing system to bring it within a state of good repair. Importantly, the latter fund would also “provide temporary operating support to crucial state corridors while the full system is being built and developed.” This implies that the Obama Administration believes that states will continue to be skeptical of funding train operations — so the federal government must step in until self-financing high-speed lines can pay for themselves.

The plan does not specify which corridors would receive funds if the money were awarded. This implies that spending would be distributed in the same manner that have been the U.S. DOT’s grants over the past year: Through merit-based awards ultimately allocated by the Secretary of Transportation.

Big projects — such as California’s High-Speed Rail line and Amtrak’s just-announced Gateway Tunnel between New Jersey and Manhattan — would undoubtedly move forward, but Mr. Biden sketched out a vision of a high-speed network that is “modern, efficient, environmentally friendly, and truly national.” This suggests that the Administration will seek to invest in rail infrastructure across the country, not just in the densest areas.

This stance is likely to attract some Republican support, especially from people representing rural districts that rely on even once-daily trains: It is worth remembering that despite being put on the chopping block year after year by the Bush Administration, Amtrak managed to hang on to its federal support even when Republicans controlled both the House and Senate between 2002 and 2007.

Nonetheless, the Republicans at the helm of the House’s Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure and its Subcommittee on Railroads, John Mica (R-FL) and Bill Shuster (R-PA), respectively, immediately denounced the plan, suggesting that the Administration was supporting “snail-speed trains to nowhere.” It is not clear to me whether most Republican Party House members will feel this way about needed infrastructure investments in their districts, however, especially if they are combined with the highway funding also to be included in the six-year reauthorization bill.

Mr. Mica and Mr. Shuster latched on to their free-market contention that Amtrak is a “Soviet-style train system [that is a] failed… monopoly” and that only the private sector is capable of developing high-speed rail, a sentiment that may be appealing to their right-wing compatriots but is unrealistic considering that almost every train improvement project in the world has at least partially been aided by government investments.

They also repeated the now-familiar contention that the Obama Administration had been remiss in not finding adequate funding for the Northeast Corridor, whose renovation now appears to have bipartisan support. This could, as Benjamin Kabak and Jeremy Steinemann have written, be good news for projects such as the Gateway Tunnel. One can imagine a compromise in which Congressional Republicans agree to some funding for intercity rail in the transportation bill, as long as the majority of dollars go towards the Northeast Corridor.

Whatever the immediate success of the President’s proposal, Mr. Obama is making evident his **plan to promote himself** as the candidate for a renewed America, one in which the future is won through public investment in essential infrastructure. This represents **a very real contrast** to the political posturing of his Republican opponents, who have been staking their political cause on being opposed to government spending of almost any type. Mr. Biden concluded his speech with the following:

“If we do not take this step now, if we do not seize the future, you tell me how America is going to have the opportunity to lead the world economy in the 21st Century like we did in the 20th. We cannot settle. We are determined to lead again. And this is the beginning of our effort to, once again, lead the future.”

#### Obama pushes transportation bills – intrinsic to his economic agenda.

Huffington Post, 11 (Erica Werner, “Obama Presses Congress To Pass Transportation Bill, End 'Political Posturing',” September 3rd, 2011, [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/09/03/obama-congress-transportation-bill-weekly-address\_n\_947733.html)//AS](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/09/03/obama-congress-transportation-bill-weekly-address_n_947733.html%29//AS)

WASHINGTON -- President Barack Obama is appealing to Congress to pass a transportation bill that would put money in the pipeline for roads and construction jobs, arguing that it's an economic imperative.

Republicans say they support passing the bill, but Obama says time is running out and "political posturing" may stand in the way.

"There's no reason to put more jobs at risk in an industry that has been one of the hardest-hit in this recession," Obama said Saturday in his weekly radio and Internet address. "There's no reason to cut off funding for transportation projects at a time when so many of our roads are congested, so many of our bridges are in need of repair and so many businesses are feeling the cost of delays.

"This isn't a Democratic or a Republican issue – it's an American issue," the president said.

Obama issued his call as he prepares to make a major jobs speech to a joint session of Congress on Thursday in which he's expected to push for bipartisan action on tax credits and infrastructure spending to get the economy out of its doldrums. A new jobs report just found the economy stopped adding jobs in August and unemployment stood at 9.1 percent.

Federal highway programs, and the fuel taxes that pay for them, will expire Sept. 30 unless Congress acts, and money for construction projects across the country would be held up. That follows the partial shutdown this summer of the Federal Aviation Administration over a showdown between the House and Senate that led to thousands of layoffs of workers on airport construction and other projects.

Transportation experts say the impact of an expiration of highway programs would be even more devastating for the economy. Transportation programs tend to have wide bipartisan support, but given the focus of the House Republican majority on cutting the budget, the legislation could run into disputes over how much to spend on it.

Republicans used their weekly address to push for passage of a balanced budget amendment to the Constitution and attack Obama over his approach to job creation. Rep. Bob Goodlatte, R-Va., complained that the administration has spent too much money on stimulus initiatives that didn't work while piling on burdensome regulations.

"While our workers are being held back by Washington, there's nothing in place to stop the federal government from bankrolling further big government spending – the kind that leads to government expansion into private-sector jobs, burdensome mandates on job creators and skyrocketing national debt," Goodlatte said.

The debt legislation passed last month requires both the House and Senate to vote on a balanced-budget amendment, and Goodlatte said Obama should use his upcoming jobs speech to join the call for the measure.

But the administration and most Democrats oppose the approach as unnecessary and political, arguing Congress should be able to control the budget without amending the Constitution. Passage is unlikely anyway since it requires two-thirds approval of both houses of Congress and ratification by three-quarters of the states.

#### Obama pressure key to resolve political gridlock – transportation bill proves.

Politico, 12 (Donovan Slack, “Obama: Pass Transportation Bill,” Politico 44, March 24th, 2012, [http://www.politico.com/politico44/2012/03/obama-pass-transportation-bill-118525.html)//AS](http://www.politico.com/politico44/2012/03/obama-pass-transportation-bill-118525.html%29//AS)

President Barack Obama jumped into the congressional fray over a stalled transportation bill on Saturday, saying the House should “put aside partisan posturing” and pass the measure authorizing $109 billion in spending over two years.

“So much of America needs to be rebuilt right now. We’ve got crumbling roads and bridges,” the president said in his weekly address to the nation. “And we’ve got thousands of unemployed construction workers who’ve been looking for a job ever since the housing market collapsed. But once again, we’re waiting on Congress.”
The Senate passed the bill on March 14, but the House has not taken it up. Current funding for transportation projects is set to dry up on March 31, and without an extension, Obama said, “Construction sites will go idle. Workers will have to go home. And our economy will take a hit.

“This Congress cannot let that happen. Not at a time when we should be doing everything in our power — Democrats and Republicans — to keep this recovery moving forward. The Senate did their part,” the president said. “Now it’s up to the House to follow suit; to put aside partisan posturing, end the gridlock, and do what’s right for the American people.”

House Republicans have so far offered only a 90-day extension. Michael Steel, a spokesman for House Speaker John Boehner, told POLITICO Friday that the House wants to “do better” than the Senate bill, and “the three-month extension is the best way to get there.”

Boehner said on Thursday that he wants the time to put together a measure that would open up more federal lands for oil and gas production as a way to pay for the transportation spending.
The problem with the Senate bill is that it doesn’t address the issue of rising gas prices and energy,” he said. “We believe that if we are going to reauthorize the highway bill, American energy production ought to be a critical part of this.”

Obama maintained in his address that more drilling is not the answer to skyrocketing gas prices. “Even if we drilled everywhere, we’d still be relying on other countries for oil.”

He sounded the popular Republican refrain of job creation and growth, pointing to a Treasury report released Friday that concluded the transportation investment would benefit the economy and put many unemployed construction workers back to work.

“This is common sense. Right now, all across this country, we’ve got contractors and construction workers who have never been more eager to get back on the job,” Obama said, noting that 90 percent of the jobs created would go to the middle class. “Those are exactly the jobs we need right now, and they’ll make the economy stronger for everybody.”

The same Treasury report notes that improved roads and other transportation infrastructure will also save Americans money on gas by alleviating congestion, which currently wastes 1.9 billion gallons of gas and costs drivers more than $100 billion in wasted fuel and lost time.

In his address, the president also reprised his all-of-the-above energy mantra of recent weeks, pushing federal investments in alternative energy sources, such as solar and wind, and battery technologies that fuel electric cars.

“So tell Congress that if we invest in new technology and new energy; in new roads and bridges and construction projects, we can keep growing our economy, put our people back to work, and remind the world why the United States is the greatest nation on Earth,” he said.

### Obama Pushes CCS

#### Obama tied to CCS legislation – established task force and has made it a national energy priority.

President Obama, 10 (Barack, “Presidential Memorandum -- A Comprehensive Federal Strategy on Carbon Capture and Storage,” Memorandum for the secretary of state, The White House, [http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/presidential-memorandum-a-comprehensive-federal-strategy-carbon-capture-and-storage)//AS](http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/presidential-memorandum-a-comprehensive-federal-strategy-carbon-capture-and-storage%29//AS)

For decades, the coal industry has supported quality high-paying jobs for American workers, and coal has provided an important domestic source of reliable, affordable energy. At the same time, coal-fired power plants are the largest contributor to U.S. greenhouse gas emissions and coal accounts for 40 percent of global emissions. Charting a path toward clean coal is essential to achieving my Administration's goals of providing clean energy, supporting American jobs, and reducing emissions of carbon pollution. Rapid commercial development and deployment of clean coal technologies, particularly carbon capture and storage (CCS), will help position the United States as a leader in the global clean energy race. My Administration is already pursuing a set of concrete initiatives to speed the commercial development of safe, affordable, and broadly deployable CCS technologies. We have made the largest Government investment in carbon capture and storage of any nation in history, and these investments are being matched by private capital. The Department of Energy is conducting a comprehensive clean coal technology program including research, development, and demonstration of CCS technologies and is pursuing important international cooperative initiatives to spur demonstration and deployment of CCS. The Environmental Protection Agency is developing regulations that address the safety, efficacy, and environmental soundness of injecting and storing carbon dioxide underground. The Department of the Interior is assessing, in coordination with the Department of Energy, the country's geologic capacity to store carbon dioxide and promoting geological storage demonstration projects on public lands. All of this work builds on the firm scientific basis that now exists for the viability of CCS technology. To further this work and develop a comprehensive and coordinated Federal strategy to speed the commercial development and deployment of clean coal technologies, I hereby establish an Interagency Task Force on Carbon Capture and Storage (Task Force). You shall each designate a senior official from your respective agency to serve on the Task Force, which shall be Co Chaired by the designees from the Department of Energy and the Environmental Protection Agency. The Task Force shall develop within 180 days of the date of this memorandum a proposed plan to overcome the barriers to the widespread, cost-effective deployment of CCS within 10 years, with a goal of bringing 5 to 10 commercial demonstration projects online by 2016. The plan should explore incentives for commercial CCS adoption and address any financial, economic, technological, legal, institutional, social, or other barriers to deployment. The Task Force should consider how best to coordinate existing administrative authorities and programs, including those that build international collaboration on CCS, as well as identify areas where additional administrative authority may be necessary. The Co Chairs shall report progress periodically to the President through the Chair of the Council on Environmental Quality. Ultimately, comprehensive energy and climate legislation that puts a cap on carbon pollution will provide the largest incentive for CCS because it will create stable, long-term, market-based incentives to channel private investment in low carbon technologies. My Administration's new CCS strategy will pave the way for this energy transition by identifying and removing barriers to rapid commercial deployment and by providing greater legal and regulatory clarity. This will help to spur private investment in CCS in the near term -- investment that will create good jobs and benefit communities. This memorandum shall be implemented consistent with applicable law and subject to the availability of appropriations. This memorandum is not intended to, and does not, create any right or benefit, substantive or procedural, enforceable at law or in equity by any party against the United States, its departments, agencies, or entities, its officers, employees, or agents, or any other person. The Secretary of Energy is hereby authorized and directed to publish this memorandum in the Federal Register. BARACK OBAMA

### Obama Pushes HHR

#### Obama’s support for HSR is unwavering – key to overcome GOP dissent.

Laing, 12 (Keith, “DOT official: Obama support of high-speed rail 'remains as strong as ever',” The Hill, June 4th, 2012, [http://thehill.com/blogs/transportation-report/railroads/230777-dot-official-obama-support-of-high-speed-rail-remains-as-strong-as-ever)//AS](http://thehill.com/blogs/transportation-report/railroads/230777-dot-official-obama-support-of-high-speed-rail-remains-as-strong-as-ever%29//AS)

Federal Railroad Administration chief Joseph Szabo said Monday that President Obama is unwavering in his support for high-speed rail projects.Speaking a conference held by the American Public Transportation Conference in Dallas, Szabo said Obama's support for rail "remains as strong as ever.
"His Fiscal Year 2013 budget requests $2.5 billion combined with $6 billion in immediate transportation investments – a total of $8.5 billion for the continued development of high-speed and intercity passenger rail projects," Szabo said. "America’s rail renaissance is well underway." Support for high-speed rail in Congress has ebbed to a definitive low since Republicans came to power in the House in 2010. Money from the 2009 economic stimulus package for railways that was offered by the Obama administration was rejected by three prominent Republican governors, and GOP members in the House moved successfully last year to eliminate future funding for high-speed rail.
Despite, Szabo said at the APTA conference Monday that "as we speak – 32 states are now moving ahead with 153 rail-development projects.
"This year alone, 44 projects in 16 states – representing close to $3 billion in federal funding – are underway or set to break ground," he said.
"And, other projects are already coming in on time and on budget."
Early in the first half of Obama's tenure in office, he called for a nationwide network of high-speed railways that he said would rival the reach of the interstate highway system. The Obama administration included $8 billion for construction in the 2009 economic stimulus, and prominently awarded the money to states the day after his 2010 State of the Union address.
Since then, a proposed high-speed railway in California that was awarded the most money by the Obama administration has come under fire for escalating costs, and opponents have argued that railways should only be built in the populous northeastern U.S.
But Szabo said Monday that citizens from other parts of the country also want to have access to high-speed railways.
"Two railroad tracks can carry as many people in an hour as sixteen lanes of highway," Szabo said.
"Americans want – and they deserve – more transportation choices," he added. "They’re tired of being stuck in traffic, delayed in airports, and facing pain at the pump."

#### Obama committed to HSR – high profile lobbies, elected officials and political pressure.

Kotkin, 12 (Joel, “Obama's High-Speed Rail Obsession,” Forbes, February 18th, 2012, <http://www.forbes.com/sites/joelkotkin/2011/02/18/obamas-high-speed-rail-obsession/>)//AS

Perhaps nothing so illustrates President Obama’s occasional disconnect with reality than his fervent advocacy of high-speed rail. Amid mounting pressure for budget cuts that affect existing programs, including those for the inner city, the president has made his $53 billion proposal to create a national high-speed rail network as among his top priorities.

Our President may be an intelligent and usually level-headed man, but this represents a serious case of policy delusion. As Robert Samuelson [pointed out in Newsweek](http://www.newsweek.com/2011/02/16/high-speed-rail-is-a-fast-track-to-government-waste.html), high-speed rail is not an appropriate fit for a country like the U.S. Except for a few areas, notably along the Northeast Corridor, the U.S. just lacks the density that would make such a system work. Samuelson calls the whole idea “a triumph of fancy over fact.”

Arguably the biggest problem with high-speed rail is its extraordinary costs, which would require massive subsidies to keep operating. Unlike the Federal Highway Program, largely financed by the gas tax, high-speed rail lacks any credible source of funding besides taxpayer dollars.

Part of the pitch for high-speed rail is nationalistic. To be a 21st century super power, we must emulate current No. 2 China. But this is a poor reason to indulge in a hugely expensive program when the U.S. already has the world’s most evolved highway, freight rail and airline system.

Also, if the U.S. were to follow the Chinese model, as some have suggested, perhaps it should impose rule from a Washington version of a centralized authoritarian government. After all, dictatorships are often quite adept at “getting things done.”  But in a democracy “getting things done” means balancing interests and efficiencies, not following orders from above.

In China high-speed rail is so costly that the trains [are too expensive for the average citizen](http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/11/16/AR2010111605823.html). Furthermore, construction costs are so high the Chinese Academy of Sciences has already warned that its debts may not be payable. This experience with ballooning costs and far lower fare revenues have raised taxpayer obligations in Taiwan and Korea and added to heavily to the national debt in Japan.

The prospect of mounting and uncontrollable costs has led governors to abandon high-speed projects  in Ohio, Wisconsin and most recently Florida,[where a battle to save the Tampa-Orlando line has begun](http://www.newgeography.com/content/002062-tampa-orlando-high-speed-rail-the-risk-local-taxpayers) . In times of budget stress, the idea of building something new, and historically difficult to contain by costs, becomes a hard sell.

Oddly, the leaders of California, faced with one of the worst fiscal positions in the country, are determined to spend several billions on what Sacramento Beecolumnist Dan Walters [has dubbed a “train to nowhere”](http://www.fresnobee.com/2010/11/28/2177257/valley-may-get-train-to-nowhere.html) for 54 miles between Madera and Corcoran — two unremarkable and remote Central Valley towns. The proposal makes the former Alaska Sen. Ted Stevens’ notorious ”bridges to nowhere” project seem like frugal public policy.

California’s train to nowhere has been justified as part of wider project to construct a statewide system. But the whole idea makes little financial sense: The University of California’s Institute for Transportation [describes the high-speed proposal](http://its.berkeley.edu/news/its/2010/07/01) as based on an “inconsistent model” whose ridership projections are simply not “reliable.”

Equally suspect are cost estimates, which have doubled (after adjustment for inflation) from 1999 to $42.6 billion last year and. A new study says that the project could currently cost [close to $65 billion](http://www.newgeography.com/content/002048-patchwork-high-speed-rail-system-unraveling). Costs for a ticket from Los Angeles to San Francisco, originally pegged at $55 one way, had nearly doubled by 2009, and now some estimates place it at about to at least a $100 or perhaps much as $190 — considerably more than an advanced-purchase ticket on far faster Southwest Airlines.

There’s growing political opposition to the system as well, and not just among penny-pinching right-wingers. Residents and local officials in the [San Francisco Peninsula](http://www.newgeography.com/content/001787-california%E2%80%99s-new-grassroots-movement-high-speed-rail-peninsula), a wealthy and reliably liberal portion of Silicon Valley, largely oppose plans to route the line through their communities. This includes some prominent liberal legislators, such as San Mateo’s Assembly Jerry Hill, who has threatened to [put high-speed rail back on the ballot](http://www.cahsrblog.com/2010/08/right-wing-candidates-attack-hsr/) if costs start to surpass initial estimates. Another Democrat, California Treasurer [Bill Lockyer](http://www.signonsandiego.com/news/2010/jul/14/u-t-editorial-lockyers-straight-talk/) has doubts that the rail authority will be able to sell the deal to potential bond-buyers   due in part to a lack of consistent estimates in ridership or cost.

So why is Obama still so determined to push the high-speed boondoggle? Largely it’s a deadly combination of theology and money. Powerful rail construction interests, notably the German giant Siemens, [are spreading cash like mustard on a bratwurst](http://money.cnn.com/2010/11/23/news/high_speed_rail_politics.fortune/index.htm) to promote the scheme. Add to that construction unions and the ever voracious investment banks who would love to pocket fees for arranging to sell the bonds and you have interests capable of influencing either party.

Then there’s what might be called the “density lobby” — big city mayors, construction firms  and the urban land owners. These magnates, who frequently extort huge public subsidies for their projects, no doubt think it grand to spend billions of public funds on something that might also increase the value of their real estate.

And finally there are the true believers, notably planners, academics, green activists and an army of rail fans. These are people who believe America[should be more like Europe](http://europeaninstitute.org/February-%E2%80%93-March-2010/europe-sending-high-speed-rail-to-us.html) — denser, more concentrated in big cities and tied to the rails. “High speed rail is not really about efficient transport,” notes California transit expert and accountant Tom Rubin. “It’s all about shaping cities for a certain agenda.”

Yet despite their power, these forces face mounting obstacles. As transportation expert Ken Orski [points out](http://www.heartland.org/budgetandtax-news.org/article/29337/A_53_Billion_HighSpeed_Rail_Program_to_Nowhere.html), the balance of power in the House now lies with suburban and rural legislators, whose constituents would not benefit much from high-speed rail. And then there are governors, increasingly Republican and conservative, very anxious not to add potentially huge obligations to their already stressed budgets.

The most decisive opposition, however, could come from those who favor transit spending but understand to the need to prioritize.  High-speed rail is far more expensive than such things as fixing current commuter rail and subways or expanding both public and private bus service. Indeed, the money that goes to urban rail often ends up being diverted from other, more cost-effective systems, notably buses.

The choice between high-speed rail and more conventional, less expensive transit has already been presaged in the fight against [expanding LA’s expensive rail system](http://www.forbes.com/2010/08/09/cities-transportation-class-opinions-columnists-joel-kotkin.html) by organizations representing bus riders. These activists contend that rail swallows funds [that could be spent on buses](http://www.thestrategycenter.org/blog/2010/10/19/draft-eir-hearing-fighting-mtas-subway-sea-boondoggle)

Much the same case is being made the San Francisco peninsula. The opponents of high-speed rail on the San Francisco Peninsula are outraged that the state would spend billions on a chancy potential boondoggle when the popular Caltrain commuter rail service is slated to be [curtailed or even eliminated](http://www.mv-voice.com/news/show_story.php?id=3879).

One can of course expect that anti-spending conservatives will be the biggest cheerleaders for high-speed rail’s decline. But transit advocates may be forced to join the chorus of opposition, in order to steer   transit spending towards more basic priorities as buses in Los Angeles, subways in New York or commuter rail in the San Francisco Bay Area.

In an era of tough budgets, and proposed cutbacks on basic services, setting sensible transportation priorities is crucial. Spending billions on a conveyance that will benefit a relative handful of people and places is not just illogical. It’s obscene.

### Obama Pushes NIB

#### Obama will push NIB – allocated 30 billion in proposed bill.

Laing, 11 (Keith, “Obama pushes for infrastructure bank proposal after debt deal,” The Hill, July 1st, 2011, <http://thehill.com/blogs/transportation-report/highways-bridges-and-roads/170681-obama-pushes-for-infrastructure-bank-proposal-after-debt-deal>)//AS

Making the case that it was important for Congress to agree on a deal to raise the federal debt ceiling, President Obama said Monday that doing so could free lawmakers to consider other job creation ideas, such as the infrastructure bank proposed by Sens. John Kerry (D-Mass.) and Kay Bailey Hutchison (R-Texas). Speaking at the end of a roughly 40-minute news conference Friday against a backdrop of last week's smaller-than-expected job growth report, Obama again made the case for the infrastructure bank. "The infrastructure bank that we've proposed is relatively small," he said. "But could we imagine a project where we're rebuilding roads, bridges and ports and schools and broadband lines and smart-grids and taking all those construction workers and putting them back to work right now? "I can imagine a very aggressive program like that around that I think the American people would rally around and that I think would be good for the economy not just next year or the year after, but for the next 20 or 30 years," Obama continued. In March, Kerry and Hutchison [proposed](http://thehill.com/blogs/transportation-report/infrastructure/149539-gop-sen-hutchison-to-co-sponsor-infrastructure-bank-bill-with-kerry)creating an American Infrastructure Financing Authority at an initial cost of about $10 billion. It would provide loans and loan guarantees for large infrastructure projects. President Obama included about $30 billion for the bank in the $556 billion he proposed spending on a highway bill over six-years, but lawmakers have recently unveiled figures that a significantly less than that amount. The Democratically-controlled Senate is pursuing a two-year, $104 billion bill, which will have a higher per-year average than the House's proposal for a six-year, $230 billion bill. House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee Chairman Rep. John Mica (R-Fla.) has said the House version of the bill will eschew a federal infrastructure bank in lieu of encouraging states to create their own. "That way they won't have to come to Washington to get approval," Mica said as he rolled out his proposed transportation bill last week.

#### Obama empirically pushes national infrastructure bank

Stohlberg and Walsh 10 – (Sheryl and Mary, NYT reporters, “Obama Offers a Transit Plan to Create Jobs,” NYT, 9/6/10, http://www.nytimes.com/2010/09/07/us/politics/07obama.html) SIyer

MILWAUKEE — President Obama, looking to stimulate a sluggish economy and create jobs, called Monday for Congress to approve major upgrades to the nation’s roads, rail lines and runways — part of a six-year plan that would cost tens of billions of dollars and create a government-run bank to finance innovative transportation projects. With Democrats facing an increasingly bleak midterm election season, Mr. Obama used a speech at a union gathering on Labor Day, the traditional start of the campaign season, to outline his plan. It calls for a quick infusion of $50 billion in government spending that White House officials said could spur job growth as early as next year — if Congress approves. That is a big if. Though transportation bills usually win bipartisan support, hasty passage of Mr. Obama’s plan seems unlikely, given that Congress has only a few weeks of work left before lawmakers return to their districts to campaign and that Republicans are showing little interest in giving Democrats any pre-election victories. Central to the plan is the president’s call for an “infrastructure bank,” which would be run by the government but would pool tax dollars with private investment, the White House says. Mr. Obama embraced the idea as a senator; with unemployment still high despite an array of government efforts, the concept has lately been gaining traction in policy circles and on Capitol Hill. Indeed, some leading proponents of such a bank — including Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger, Republican of California; Gov. Ed Rendell, Democrat of Pennsylvania; and Michael R. Bloomberg, the independent mayor of New York — would like to see it finance a broader range of projects, including water and clean-energy projects. They say such a bank would spur innovation by allowing a panel of experts to approve projects on merit, rather than having lawmakers simply steer transportation money back home. “It will change the way Washington spends your tax dollars,” Mr. Obama said here, “reforming the haphazard and patchwork way we fund and maintain our infrastructure to focus less on wasteful earmarks and outdated formulas, and more on competition and innovation that gives us the best bang for the buck.” But the notion of a government-run bank — indeed, a government-run anything — is bound to prove contentious during an election year in which voters are furious over bank bailouts and over what many perceive as Mr. Obama pursuing a big government agenda. Even before the announcement Monday, Republicans were expressing caution. “It’s important to keep in mind that increased spending — no matter the method of delivery — is not free,” said Representative Pat Tiberi, an Ohio Republican who is on a Ways and Means subcommittee that held hearings on the bank this year. He warned that “federally guaranteed borrowing and lending could place taxpayers on the hook should the proposed bank fail.” The announcement comes after weeks of scrambling by a White House desperate to give a jolt to the lackluster recovery, and is part of a broader package of proposals that Mr. Obama intends to introduce on Wednesday during a speech in Cleveland. The transportation initiative would revise and extend legislation that has lapsed. Specifically, the president wants to rebuild 150,000 miles of road, lay and maintain 4,000 miles of rail track, restore 150 miles of runways and advance a next-generation air-traffic control system.

### Obama Pushes Keystone

#### Obama pushing keystone now

Rueters, 12 (“Obama to push agencies on Keystone permitting,” RUeters, March 21st, 2012, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/03/21/usa-keystone-obama-idUSL1E8QL01020120321>)//AS

(Reuters) - President Barack Obama will issue a memo to federal agencies on Thursday directing federal agencies to prioritize permitting of TransCanada's southern leg of the Keystone pipeline, a senior White House official said on Wednesday.

Obama will visit Cushing, Oklahoma, on Thursday to promote his energy policies amid soaring gasoline prices. Obama delayed a decision on the Canada-to-Texas Keystone XL pipeline in January. But he has thrown his support behind the building of the pipeline's southern leg, which would run from Oklahoma to Texas and help relieve a glut of U.S. and Canadian crude in the Cushing oil hub.

"What the president is actually going to be issuing tomorrow is the specific memorandum in Cushing which directs federal agencies to name the Cushing pipeline as a top priority of the new executive orders' expedited permitting process," the official told reporters in a conference call. TransCanada has not yet applied for the southern leg, but is expected to do so shortly.

#### Obama pledges accelerated support for keystone – key to re-election.

Rueters, 12 (Jeff Mason, “Facing heat over gas price rise, Obama vows to speed pipeline's southern leg,” March 22, 2012, [http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/03/22/us-usa-campaign-obama-pipeline-idUSBRE82L0UU20120322)//AS](http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/03/22/us-usa-campaign-obama-pipeline-idUSBRE82L0UU20120322%29//AS)

(Reuters) - Standing in front of a row of pipes, President Barack Obama pledged on Thursday to accelerate approval of the southern leg of the Keystone XL pipeline, seeking to deflect criticism that his rejection of the full project helped drive up gasoline prices.

The campaign-style stop was immediately dismissed as a stunt by Republicans, saying that Obama doesn't have the authority to really jump start the project. Analysts say it won't likely be finished until 2014 at the earliest.

Rising fuel costs are threatening to derail Obama's hopes of winning re-election in November, and Republicans have honed in on his decision to block TransCanada Corp's Canada-to-Texas pipeline as a sign that his energy priorities were hurting America.

U.S. gasoline prices have jumped nearly 30 cents in the past month, pushing the national average to $3.87 a gallon, according to the Energy Information Administration.

Obama's trip to Cushing, Oklahoma, the starting site of the southern leg of the controversial project, was designed to show his "all of the above" energy strategy included room for oil and gas development in addition to support for renewable fuels.

"Today I'm directing my administration to cut through the red tape, break through the bureaucratic hurdles, and make this project a priority," Obama said, standing without a tie at a podium that was surrounded by rows of green- and copper-colored piping segments.

### Obama Pushes Mass Transit

#### Obama is a committed defender of mass transit – empirically has threatened a veto to bills excluding it.

Chaban, 12 (Matt, “Do-or-Die Obama Stands Up for Mass Transit, Cities,” The Observer, February 2nd, 2012, [http://observer.com/2012/02/do-or-die-obama-stands-up-for-mass-transit-cities/)//AS](http://observer.com/2012/02/do-or-die-obama-stands-up-for-mass-transit-cities/%29//AS)

Maybe [we were wrong](http://www.observer.com/2012/02/obama-to-cities-drop-dead%E2%80%94the-life-and-death-of-a-great-american-urban-policy/). Maybe 2012 will be different, President Obama will stand up to Congress, maybe he will even do the unthinkable and buck three decades of political trends, turning cities into a campaign issues once again (ever since Reagan won without taking a single major city, both parties have largely ignored urban issues).

That is at least the message coming out of the White House, in the face of the despised-on-all-sides House transportation bill, a program created by Reagan no less. On Tuesday (in response to The Observer‘s pending article, perhaps?), the administration released [a statement declaring the president would veto the transit bill](http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:xiRgDb_h8H0J:www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/omb/legislative/sap/112/saphr7r_20120214.pdf+STATEMENT+OF+ADMINISTRATION+POLICY+H.R.+7&cd=1&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=us&client=safari) if it reached his desk.

The statement outlines a number of reasons for denying the bill, including a shout out to cities, which is highlighted below.

The Administration has serious concerns with provisions in the bill that would make America’s roads, rails, and transit systems less safe, reduce the transportation options available to America’s traveling public, short circuit local decision-making, and turn back the clock on environmental and labor protections.

[...]

H.R. 7 eliminates programs that ensure the Nation’s metropolitan areas have sufficient resources to provide multiple transportation options to help reduce congestion. H.R. 7 also eliminates a thirty-year legacy of dedicated transit funding from the Highway Trust Fund. The bill allocates Federal funding for transit in a manner that undermines local decision making regarding the operation of local transit systems. This bill also reduces authorized funding levels for Amtrak and loosens the requirements on loan programs, putting taxpayer dollars at risk. In addition, the bill inappropriately targets funding towards systems that carry only a small number of the Nation’s bus passengers. Finally, while the Administration appreciates that the bill does not contain earmarks, H.R. 7 eliminates funding for a number of discretionary grant programs, missing an opportunity to promote competition and innovation.

As we previously wrote, competition and innovation are a big part of this administration’s urban strategy. Congress had better not mess with that.

### Obama Pushes Dredging

#### Obama is committed to dredging policies – Jacksonville proves.

Dredging News Online, 12 (“Obama committed to Port of Jacksonville improvements,” June 12th, 2012, <http://www.sandandgravel.com/news/article.asp?v1=16024)//AS>

CBS12 reports that President Barack Obama says his administration is committed to improvements for the Port of Jacksonville.

Obama told television station WJXT in Jacksonville that his administration is committed to funding dredging of the St Johns River so Jacksonville can bring in large cargo ships and become home again to an aircraft carrier at Naval Station Mayport.

Obama said: "Certainly on the port and the channels, that is something that's very important to the economic development of the region."

Obama said there's money in his budget to make sure the Army Corps of Engineers can continue to review the feasibility of deepening and expanding operations there.

### Obama Pushes Aviation/NextGen

#### Obama pledged support for aviation infrastructure modernization.

AOPA, 10 (Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association, “Obama calls for transportation infrastructure investment,” September 6th, 2010, <http://www.aopa.org/advocacy/articles/2010/100906obama.html>)//AS

President Barack Obama announced Sept. 6 that his administration will press for a major investment in the nation’s transportation infrastructure, including at airports and in the Next Generation air transportation system (NextGen). The president made the announcement during a Labor Day speech in Milwaukee, Wis.

"We appreciate the recognition in President Obama’s infrastructure announcement of the critical role aviation plays in the nation’s transportation system," said AOPA President Craig Fuller. "AOPA will work to support the president’s infrastructure program to ensure the monies are used effectively at airports across the country and to advance the modernization of our air traffic control system as part of the FAA’s NextGen initiative.

"But as Congress and the administration proceed, it is vitally important that they both remember that general aviation is an integral part of the national transportation system, and that the key to the success of NextGen is a commitment by the government to invest in new technologies for all users."

Obama’s plan calls for investment in the nation’s entire transportation infrastructure: roads, rails, and runways. He intends to ask Congress to frontload the program with an immediate $50 billion—described as a "significant share of the infrastructure resources"—and pledged to work with Congress to fully pay for the program.

While much of the president’s proposal focuses on surface transportation, including high-speed rail, he promised "robust" investment in air traffic control modernization. A White House fact sheet released to accompany the president’s speech said, "This investment will help both the FAA and airlines to install new technologies and, among other improvements, move from a national ground-based radar surveillance system to a more accurate satellite-based surveillance system—the backbone of a broader effort to reduce delays for passengers, increase fuel efficiency for carriers, and cut airport noise for those who live and work near airports."

"AOPA will be paying close attention as this proposal moves forward," concluded Fuller. "We will be especially attentive to how the aviation portion of the plan is funded, and to whether or not the investments benefit the entire aviation transportation system."

#### Obama supports NextGen – calls it a smart investment.

The Hill, 11 (Keith Laing, “Obama: 'NextGen' air traffic control system a 'smart investment',” The Hill, June 14th, 2012, [http://thehill.com/blogs/transportation-report/aviation/166373-obama-nextgen-air-traffic-control-system-a-smart-investment-)//AS](http://thehill.com/blogs/transportation-report/aviation/166373-obama-nextgen-air-traffic-control-system-a-smart-investment-%29//AS)

During President Obama's meeting of his Jobs and Competitiveness Council in swing state North Carolina this week, the Southwest Airlines CEO Gary Kelly suggested building a new air traffic control system could stimulate economic growth. Kelly, who is a member of Obama's jobs council, told the president that the new system known as "NextGen" could save the airlines 15 percent, which could they could be using for other activities that would stimulate jobs. "We want to grow, we want to buy more airplanes, but we're not just generating sufficient profits to make those kinds of investments," Kelly said to CNNMoney. President Obama seemed open to the idea, the agency said, though Republicans have indicated they are unlikely to go along with his proposal for a $556 billion transportation spending bill. "As we move forward, distinguishing between smart investments and dumb investments, it's not something that's often highlighted in these debates," Obama said. The Federal Aviation Administration has long planned to switch the air traffic control system from World War II-era radar technology to a satellite-based system. But in the series of continuing resolutions approved this spring as Congress was working to avert a government shutdown, lawmakers cut about $200 million from the FAA's budget that would have gone to the conversion. Additionally, a long-term overall funding bill for the FAA has also been bogged down in discussions over the labor rights of airline and railroad employees.

### Obama Pushes Army Corps / Inland Water Ways

#### Obama politically invested in Army Corps projects – budget proposal.

Quinlan, 12 (Paul, “Obama's budget touts navigation, but waterway interests aren't happy,” E&E Publishing, February 15th, 2012, [http://www.eenews.net/public/Greenwire/2012/02/15/4)//AS](http://www.eenews.net/public/Greenwire/2012/02/15/4%29//AS)

The Obama administration is portraying its fiscal 2013 budget proposal for the Army Corps of Engineers as a boon for businesses that rely on navigable inland waterways.

As Jo-Ellen Darcy, the Army's assistant secretary of civil works, puts it, the spending plan reflects "the importance the administration places on navigation."

Navigation interests have long grumbled about what they see as the Army Corps' emphasis on ecosystem restoration at the expense of dredging shipping channels, maintaining locks and other projects aimed at keeping waterways open.

President Obama's overall $4.7 billion Army Corps budget proposal, Darcy said at a briefing Monday, would send 37 percent of the agency's cash to navigation projects, compared with 33 percent for environmental restoration and 30 percent for flood control.

#### Obama pushes inland waterway infrastructure – proposal proves.

Glass, 11 (Pamela, “Obama proposes inland waterways financing program,” Work Boat, September 26th, 2012, <http://www.workboat.com/newsdetail.aspx?id=11266)//AS>

As part of his deficit reduction program announced on Sept. 19, President Obama is proposing a new user financing system for inland waterways.

There are no specifics yet from the administration on how such a system would be structured. Among options explored in the past were lockage usage fees, annual licensing fees, system wide and segment-specific tolls, ton-mile charges and lock charges for the most congested portions of a waterway.

Unlike previous proposals, however, this one would supplement rather than replace the current diesel fuel tax – now set at 20 cents per gallon – which the barge industry pays into the Inland Waterways Trust Fund. The IWTF finances 50 percent share of new infrastructure construction, sharing it with taxpayer dollars.

A new user fee would generate about $1.1 billion of additional revenue in the trust fund, Jo-Ellen Darcy, assistant secretary of the Army-Civil Works, told a House subcommittee hearing on Wednesday.

“The additional revenue would enable a more robust level of funding for safe, reliable, highly cost-effective, and environmentally sustainable waterways, and contribute to deficit reduction and economic growth,” she said in a statement.

Darcy said the administration has begun to discuss the plan with the inland industry and other stakeholders.

### Obama Pushes Hydrogen Fuel Stations

#### Obama increasing support for hydrogen fuel technology

Cardozo, 12 (Suzette, “Obama may be charging up support for fuel-cell technology,” Zimbio.com, June 22, 2012, [http://www.zimbio.com/Hydrogen+Fuel/articles/ZHY5pbMSdrE/Obama+may+charging+up+support+fuel+cell+technology)//AS](http://www.zimbio.com/Hydrogen%2BFuel/articles/ZHY5pbMSdrE/Obama%2Bmay%2Bcharging%2Bup%2Bsupport%2Bfuel%2Bcell%2Btechnology%29//AS)

Looks like President Obama’s stance on yet another issue is “evolving.” The president’s administration is indicating it might increase support for hydrogen fuel-cell technology, Bloomberg Businessweek reported. As regular readers surely remember, the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) [cut funding for H2 vehicles back in 2009](http://www.zimbio.com/go/BPpu1Owwbqf/http%3A/green.autoblog.com/2009/05/08/obama-doe-slash-hydrogen-fuel-cell-funding-in-new-budget/), but the government’s recent statements [have hinted at future more favorable to fuel cell fans](http://www.zimbio.com/go/X0CNXtywvma/http%3A/green.autoblog.com/2012/03/27/feds-spending-up-to-2-million-on-hydrogen-station-study/). Last month, for example, DOE Secretary Steven Chu [made remarks](http://www.zimbio.com/go/m4X7g-MhwRD/http%3A/green.autoblog.com/2012/05/22/obama-administration-rethinking-support-for-hydrogen-fuel-cell-v/) supportive of more research into hydrogen vehicles. Now, National Fuel Cell Research Center Director Scott Samuelsen referred to a “dramatic turnaround in the past six to nine months” on the part of the administration. Obama has so far pushed hard for battery-electric technology, calling for a million plug-in vehicles to be on U.S. roads by 2015.

### Obama Gets Blame

#### Obama inevitably gets blame even if it wasn’t his fault – debt ceiling proves

Douthat 11 – (Ross, NYT Writer, “The Diminished President,” New York Times, 7/31/11, <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/08/01/opinion/the-diminished-president.html?_r=1&ref=todayspaper>) SIyer

By rights, Barack Obama should be emerging as the big political winner in the debt ceiling debate. For months, he’s positioned himself near the center of public opinion, leaving Republicans to occupy the rightward flank. Poll after poll suggests that Americans prefer the president’s call for a mix of spending cuts and tax increases to the Republican Party’s anti-tax approach. Poll after poll shows that House Republicans, not Obama, would take most of the blame if the debt ceiling weren’t raised. Yet the president’s approval ratings have been **sinking steadily for weeks**, hitting a George W. Bush-esque low of 40 percent in a recent Gallup survey. The voters incline toward Obama on the issues, still like him personally and consider the Republican opposition too extreme. But they are increasingly judging his presidency a failure anyway. The administration would no doubt blame this judgment on the steady stream of miserable economic news. But it should save some of the blame for its own political approach. Ever since the midterms, the White House’s tactics have consistently maximized President Obama’s short-term advantage while diminishing his overall authority. Call it the “too clever by half” presidency: the administration’s maneuvering keeps working out as planned, but Obama’s position keeps eroding. Start with the first round of deficit debates this winter. After the Republican sweep, the White House seemed to have two options: double down on Keynesian stimulus or pivot to the center and champion deficit reduction. Instead, Obama chose to hover above the fray, passing on his own fiscal commission’s recommendations and letting the Republicans make the first move. The strategy worked, in a sense. Goaded by the president’s evasiveness, Paul Ryan and the House Republicans put forward a detailed long-term budget proposal of their own, whose Medicare cuts proved predictably unpopular. But while the subsequent policy debate favored Obama, the optics of the confrontation diminished him. The chairman of the House Budget Committee looked more like a leader than the president of the United States. Then came the spring’s great foreign policy dilemma, the civil war in Muammar el-Qaddafi’s Libya. The president (wisely) didn’t want to put America’s blood and treasure on the line for the rebels, but he also didn’t want to take responsibility for letting Qaddafi crush the revolt. So the White House opted for a kind of quasi war, throwing just enough military power at the problem to ensure a stalemate and then punting responsibility to our NATO allies. An Obama adviser told The New Yorker’s Ryan Lizza that the president was pioneering a new American way of statecraft: “Leading from behind.” Again, the strategy worked, sort of. An immediate humanitarian crisis was averted, and Libya quickly fell out of the headlines. But it left Americans to contemplate a peculiar and unpresidential spectacle: The leader of the free world taking the country to war while pretending that he wasn’t, and then effectively washing his hands of the ultimate outcome — which, 135 days and counting later, is still very much in doubt. The same pattern has played out in the debt ceiling debate. Instead of drawing clear lines and putting forward detailed proposals, the president has played Mr. Compromise — ceding ground to Republicans here, sermonizing about Tea Party intransigence and Washington gridlock there, and fleshing out his preferred approach reluctantly, if at all. The White House no doubt figured that this negotiating strategy would either lead to a bipartisan grand bargain or else expose Republican extremism — or better still, do both. And again, the strategy is arguably working. Americans were given a glimpse of right-wing populism’s reckless side last week, and the final deal will probably let the president burnish his centrist credentials just in time for 2012. But winning a debate on points isn’t a substitute for looking like a leader. It’s one thing to bemoan politics-as-usual when you’re running for the White House. It’s quite another to publicly throw up your hands over our “dysfunctional government” when you’re the man the voters put in charge of it. In fairness, the president’s passive-aggressive approach is a bipartisan affliction. The ostensible front-runner for the Republican nomination, Mitt Romney, took a deliberately hazy position on last week’s crucial House debate, preferring to flunk a test of leadership rather than risk alienating either side. (The Washington Examiner’s Tim Carney quipped that “if you took Obama’s plan and Romney’s plan, and just met in the middle, you’d be in the middle of nowhere.”) This leaves Americans to contemplate two possibilities more alarming than debt-ceiling brinkmanship. First, that **we’re living through yet another failed presidency**. And second, that there’s nobody waiting in the wings who’s up to the task either.

#### Obama gets blamed for everything – deep disconnect between congress and the president

Teitelman 11 – (Robert, Editor in Chief for The Deal, “Why Our Politics Are So Bad,” The Deal, 8/1/11, <http://www.thedeal.com/thedealeconomy/why-our-politics-are-so-bad.php>) SIyer

The debt ceiling looks like it will be raised, though who knows? The House Republicans believe they have won -- they at least are spinning that furiously, which presents the unlikely sight of a blackmailer crowing about his successful operation, joined by a variety of seething left-of-center pundits -- and with the scent of Obama blood in the water, maybe they'll hold out for even greater cuts or a deal that protects defense spending. Generally, as the media emerges in full-throated roar, Obama is being declared the big loser from both sides of the aisle; see Ross Douthat and Paul Krugman in today's New York Times. Perhaps. Obama's polls have been falling, probably because the president these days **gets blamed for everything** from a bad economy to Mississippi flooding to lousy student test scores, as if he's less a political leader and more a medicine man. We elect shamans, not people. Perhaps he did play this all wrong; **in politics**, substance -- "**reality**" that we've heard so much about these days -- **means little**. Obama's big mistake, at the end of the day, was his belief that he could occupy a center in a viciously polarized arena. As the columns and blogs suggest this morning, we've got a deal, but we've also got a nasty political problem. From an electoral perspective -- and part of that political problem is that we can't seem to forget, for even a moment, the permanent campaign -- **Obama is already being declared a loser in 2012**. We'll see. The electoral issue, particularly in a presidential campaign, is what's more important: deficit reduction (with all the affiliated issues: tax hikes or entitlement cuts) or the blackmail problem, which is to say, the Congress problem. How big is the center these days? How will that center recall these events -- and the possibility that we may see more hostage taking in years ahead? The debt ceiling struggle was a long and ugly tussle, managing to confirm the conventional wisdom of Washington inaction, bloviation, stalemate and failure. It was wildly irresponsible, dangerous and absurd. It shook people up. Several weeks ago, the Times' Thomas Friedman saw the crisis as an opportunity for a "radical center" to emerge, independent of both increasingly toothless, in terms of discipline, parties. I'm skeptical of the formation of an actual center party but not of center bloc. Today, in the blitz of punditry and spin, the center seems to have vanished. But electorally, it does feel as if there's stirring discontent with the highly ideological approach to politics from both parties. That, of course, may be wishful thinking. I take it as good news -- I'm undoubtedly grasping at straws here -- that the commentary today has a thread of reflection about the deeper governance problems. In The New York Times, Jacob Hacker and Oona Hathaway offer a bracing perspective on a Congress that has increasingly over time eluded accountability, distorting the relationship with the executive. "The debate has threatened to play out as a destructive but all too familiar two-step, revealing how dysfunctional the relationship between Congress and the president has become. The two-step begins with a Congress that is hamstrung and incapable of effective action. The president then decides he has little alternative but to strike out on his own, regardless of what the Constitution says. Congress, unable or unwilling to defend its role, resorts instead to carping at 'his' program, 'his' war or 'his' economy -- while denying any responsibility for the mess it helped create." This helps explain the ease of which Republicans have walked away from the wild spending of the George W. Bush years. In fact, all this feels familiar, both the congressional fecklessness -- remember the plague of earmarks -- and the accrual of presidential power in the form of executive orders, signing powers and Bushian arguments of pre-eminent executive power in war making, eavesdropping or torture. Everyone understands the barriers to congressional action: supermajority requirements, like the Senate's filibuster rule, and, as Hacker and Hathaway argue, legislative my-way-or-the-highway mechanisms, like a debt ceiling or a balanced budget amendment. But there are far more problems than those. Campaigns have grown more and more expensive, and PACs and corporate donors have become more and more essential. Lobbyists proliferate. Congress has evolved a system to avoid the big issues while keeping a flow of benefits going to their supporters and constituents. **Party discipline has broken down, replaced by fundraising prowess**. The demands of the permanent campaign are such that it demands a kind of branding for candidates: clear, simple, straightforward, ideological and **mostly idiotic. Compromise**, complexity and deal making **become deeply suspect** to an electorate that believes they've been sold down the river. Paradoxically, the creation of permanent campaigns fosters the opportunity to challenge from the extreme -- particularly in the House. Hard times makes this likelier.

**Link File**

**Aff**

**Republicans Support Transportation Policies**

**Republicans cave for transportation policies**

**Freemark 6/10** – (Yonah, Writer for the Transport Politic, “In Which the Rhetoric of Fiscal Conservatism Ceases to Convince,” Transport Politic, 6/10/12, http://www.thetransportpolitic.com/2012/06/10/in-which-the-rhetoric-of-fiscal-conservatism-ceases-to-convince/) SIyer

**Apparently not when it comes to transportation. If last week’s vote proves anything, it is that support for the idea that spending on transportation should be limited to user revenues is confined to a right-wing minority so far on the sidelines that it does not even account for half of House Republicans.** Faced with the choice between drastically reduced spending on infrastructure — a reduction of 30% or more if spending on transportation were to match revenues, according to some estimates (because of the fall-off in collections from the federal fuel taxes, which have historically paid for national spending on roads and transit) – or keep spending in line with demand, rather than the money available, the majority of elected officials across the political spectrum continue to select the latter.

The House’s vote comes almost 1,000 days since the transportation authorization legislation officially expired and it indicates that members of the Democratic and Republican Parties may not be as far apart in ideological terms as we might have thought. While the House GOP’s legislation announced earlier this year — H.R. 7, which would have significantly damaged transit funding — was certainly far from bipartisan, its Senate counterpart MAP-21 has just the right elements of moderation that can please politicians on both sides of the aisle, and indeed it made it through that chamber with a large majority of votes. For a month now, House and Senate leaders have been working on a compromise between hard-core right-wing views about spending on transportation and the Senate’s moderation, and little has come of the negotiations. In fact, last week House Speaker John Boehner (R-OH) suggested that transportation spending be extended another six months, until the end of December, to avoid making any sort of hard decisions now about a long-term piece of legislation. (The current extension, which basically keeps federal spending at 2009 levels, will expire at the end of this month.) But now that it is obvious that members of both political parties really do want to keep spending going on infrastructure, perhaps compromise is in the offing.

**Neg**

**1nc Transportation Spending Link**

**Congress has no appetite for more transportation spending --- its tapped out**

**Pittsburg Post-Gazette 6/30** (June 30, 2012, Ed O’keefe, staff writer for the Washington Post, “Congress’ bipartisan deal Oks transportation funds, student loan rate”, post-gazette.com,http://www.post-gazette.com/stories/news/us/congress-bipartisan-deal-oks-transportation-funds-student-loan-rate-642596/?print=1) MG

Republicans agreed to drop language authorizing the Keystone pipeline, and Democrats agreed to omit $1.4 billion for conservation projects. Supporters said the transportation deal would help save more than 2 million jobs.

**House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee Chairman** John **Mica**, R-Fla., **had fought for a more ambitious spending plan, but conceded** Friday, **"With the financial condition of the United States, it's the best we could do right now."**

**--- 2nc Link Ext**

**There is no political support for ambitious transportation investments**

**Rampton, 6/29** (Roberta Rampton and Thomas Ferraro, “Congress poised to wrap up transport, loans, flood bill,” 6/29/2012, http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/06/29/us-usa-transportation-house-idUSBRE85S16K20120629)

(Reuters) - A bipartisan bill to fund a massive job-creating transportation bill, retain low interest rates for millions of student loans, and maintain national flood insurance won approval on Friday in the U.S. House of Representatives.

On a vote of 373-52, the House sent the measure to the Senate for anticipated concurrence later in the day, which would clear the way for President Barack Obama to sign it into law.

**Both Democrats and Republicans embraced the measure, largely because it would create or save about three million jobs, a key issue in the November 6 elections** since voters' top concern is the struggling U.S. economy.

**The bill came together this week as lawmakers calculated the election-year impact of continued gridlock on measures affecting jobs**, soaring consumer debt, and help for people who need government underwriting for flood risk to buy a home.

"It has indeed been a very bumpy road to get to this point," said John Mica, the Republican chairman of the House Transportation Committee, who led negotiations on the bill.

"I'm not particularly pleased with some of the twists and tu-HOUSErns," he said on the House floor on Friday, describing the difficulties of reaching the deal in the gridlocked Congress.

**After months of negotiations, the compromise was reached just days away from** the deadline for an increase in student loan rates and for **a lapse in transportation funding.**

**Ambitious proposals to shore up U.S. infrastructure gave way to a deal that basically keeps transportation funding at current levels.**

The blueprint was based on a bipartisan proposal by the Democratic-led Senate and was supported by the Obama administration.

**Our link was proven by the recent transportation bill --- limited resources constrained what the Congress was able to include in the compromise transportation bill**

**The Columbian 6/28** – June 28, 2012 (Andrea Damewood and Dave Mathieu, staff writers for The Colombian, “Herrera Beutler: Compromise drove transportation bill”, Colombian.com, <http://www.columbian.com/news/2012/jun/28/herrera-beutler-compromise-drove-transportation-bi/>) MG

**Congresswoman** Jaime Herrera **Beutler said the compromise on the transportation bill** reached Wednesday **includes some provisions she's happy about, and some she's not — but that's to be expected when Democrats and Republicans sit down to hammer out their differences in a high-profile piece of legislation.**

The first-term Republican representative from Camas pointed out that, under the compromise bill, $500 million would be reauthorized for a grant program that could help finance the Columbia River Crossing project. The previous transportation bill had only allowed $356 million for the grant program, which doles out money based on a project's national and regional significance.

"From day one, I have said that the federal government must be prepared to pay its fair share of replacing the (Interstate 5) bridge," she said.

The $500 million allotment for all megaprojects nationwide could send money the CRC's way, but it's likely to be far less than what the $3.5 billion project needs. Project officials as recently as this month told state lawmakers that they're banking on $400 million to $500 million from the Projects of Regional and National Significance account -- or one year's allotment for all of the United States.

**As U.S. Deputy Secretary of Transportation** Polly **Trottenberg said** in an interview with Bike Portland last December: "The truth is, **one thing we're seeing all over the country is there are still a lot of places that want to see a lot of big and grand projects and the scale of funding that's available at the state and national level is just not what it used to be. So that bigger conflict is looming in places all over the country**. Certainly, with the CRC, that's been the issue all along."

Project leaders have said that they can phase construction to build as cash flows in over a number of years from a variety of sources.

That's not enough to convince CRC critic and Portland economist Joe Cortright.

"CRC has no contingency plan — they've never said what happens, or how they will get the money, if the federal government provides less than $400 million for the highway portion," he wrote in an email to The Columbian on Thursday, adding that the states would be left on the hook for the gap.

Congress' transportation compromise was reached Wednesday night and still must pass through the House and Senate, but "it's in a really good place" to do so, Herrera Beutler said. The compromise legislation gives Congress the go-ahead to spend more than $100 billion over the next two years on surface transportation and infrastructure projects.

Trails, streamlined provisions

Herrera Beutler was recently appointed to the special transportation committee tasked with reconciling differences between the transportation proposals presented by the mostly Democratic Senate and the mostly Republican House. This was Herrera Beutler's first time serving on a bill reconciliation committee.

Herrera Beutler said she's happy that the nation's Recreational Trails Program was safeguarded in the bill. At one point, lawmakers wanted to "wipe that program right out," she said, but "we were able to protect that, and that was bipartisan. There are a lot of folks in our area that utilize trails."

The compromise bill also would dedicate Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund money for dredging and upkeep of waterways and ports. And, it would streamline the administrative process for transportation projects, which means the average amount of time it takes to complete a transportation project would be reduced.

"It's basic, good government reform," she said of the streamlining provision, adding that important oversight rules wouldn't be circumvented. "You just don't have to do it multiple times."

The transportation streamlining provision was one of the trade-offs during negotiations on the bill. Democrats allowed the Republicans' streamlining plan while Republicans gave up their provision affirming a controversial oil pipeline project and another provision to block the Environmental Protection Agency from regulating toxic ash generated by coal-fired power plants.

The transportation bill also includes language to keep down the interest rates on subsidized Stafford loans for undergraduates, which are provided to low-income students. The 3.4 percent interest rate established by Congress five years ago was expected to double on Sunday if lawmakers didn't act.

Herrera Beutler said she supports keeping the interest rate low and was comfortable with including that provision in the transportation bill because it was an issue that had already been vetted and debated in both chambers of Congress.

"I don't think we should double the student loan interest rate," she said. "That's important."

**Limited by resources**

Herrera **Beutler said she wishes the transportation bill could authorize money for a longer period of time, but "everybody wishes we had more money to work with. The economy's not doing well, and I don't want to raise taxes and we have a certain amount of money to work with."**

**HSR Links**

**HSR costs Obama political capital – empirics prove.**

**Hanscom, 12** (Greg, “President Obama and the forgotten urban agenda,” Grist, January 17th 2012, <http://grist.org/cities/president-obama-and-the-forgotten-urban-agenda/>)//AS

Leinberger is among the many observers who are dismayed at the politicization of transportation and smart growth issues — and at the president’s soft-pedaling on the issues. “The most disappointing thing that the administration has not done,” he says, “is that it has not passed a new transportation bill.”

**The transportation bill is a gargantuan piece of federal legislation that funds road, bridge, and rail projects nationwide — and has huge implications for the way cities and suburbs grow**. Unable to agree on a new direction, **Congress has punted on the issue for the past two years, passing resolutions that simply extend the old policy — a policy that encourages sprawling suburban growth.**

“**That’s a lack of leadership coming out of White House**,” Leinberger says. “President **Obama spent too much political capital on high-speed rail instead of looking at light rail, street cars, and the entire range of transportation alternatives.”**

**Gas Tax Agenda Links**

**Gas tax unpopular – Maryland proves.**

**Stein, 12** (Perry, “Morning Read: O'Malley To Pitch Unpopular Gas Tax In House And Senate,” NBC Washington, March 14th, 2012, <http://www.nbcwashington.com/blogs/first-read-dmv/Morning-Read-OMalley-To-Pitch-Unpopular-Gas-Tax-In-House-And-Senate-142611796.html>)//AS

Gov. Martin **O’Malley will appear in front of House and Senate committee**s today **to make a personal pitch for his widely unpopular proposal to increase gas tax.** **The tax is expected to generate $613 million-a-year and would be used to fund road and transportation projects**. O’Malley knows that **the gas tax won’t be an easy sell,** according to [The Baltimore Sun.](http://www.baltimoresun.com/news/maryland/bs-md-omalley-gas-tax-20120313%2C0%2C7748210.story) **With gas prices on the rise, many people don’t see why more gas taxes are needed and are wary of** O’Malley **increasing** **the gas tax when his budget also calls for increased income taxes**. Proponents of the tax argue that gas tax in Maryland hasn’t been raised since 1992 when the price of gas was $1.08 a gallon. The tax continues to be at 23.5 cents a gallon, or about 6 percent, and, according to The Sun, the revenue it brings has lost two-thirds of its value. O’Malley’s proposal would raise the tax about 18-21 cents over three years. He estimates that the construction projects the tax would fund would create nearly 20,000 jobs. Maryland has some of the most congested roads in the country and the longest average daily commute.

**Gas tax not included in highway bill extension.**

**Washington Post, 12** (Brad Plumer, “Highway bill showdown: Five things to know,” June 29th, 2012, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/ezra-klein/wp/2012/06/29/highway-bill-showdown-five-things-to-know/>)//AS

**The new federal transportation bill — in effect until the end of fiscal year 2014 — provides essentially level**[funding](http://www.htrnews.com/article/20120713/MAN0601/307130030/Our-view-Transportation-bill-missing-few-gears?odyssey=mod%7Cnewswell%7Ctext%7CFRONTPAGE%7Cs)**for roads and transit,** even as the nation’s highways and bridges continue to crack and crumble and transit systems nationwide enjoy record ridership. The new bill also **reduces environmental protections by easing regulations** on certain projects, including those receiving a low percentage of federal funding. **Moreover, the bill cuts funding for pedestrian and biking projects by more than 50%, eliminates dedicated funding for bridge repair, and gives a smaller tax benefit to commuters who use transit** than to those who park.

On the plus side, the $105-billion bill avoids some of the draconian cuts proposed by the House, while streamlining the federal approval process for projects and consolidating highway programs. Still, **in the end, Senate leaders, after passing a far better transportation bill, gave away too much to the House in final conference committee negotiations.**

**Making matters worse, legislators never had a serious debate on raising the 18.4-cent federal gas tax — a needed step to protect the solvency of the Highway Trust**[Fund](http://www.htrnews.com/article/20120713/MAN0601/307130030/Our-view-Transportation-bill-missing-few-gears?odyssey=mod%7Cnewswell%7Ctext%7CFRONTPAGE%7Cs). **The federal gas tax hasn’t risen since 1993, and inflation has eroded its purchasing power by 80 percent.** The Highway Trust Fund is no longer sustainable and will need nearly $19 billion in general-fund transfers in 2013 and 2014 to remain solvent.

**Plan costs capital --- Republican oppose**

**Rooks, 12** (Douglas, “Gas tax aversion a dead-end road,” Seacostonline, July 8th, 2012, [http://www.seacoastonline.com/articles/20120708-OPINION-207080318)//AS](http://www.seacoastonline.com/articles/20120708-OPINION-207080318%29/AS)

So **why is the gas tax a political football**? At the federal level, **we're dealing with endemic distrust of Washington. And — it must be admitted — presidents have often muddied the waters**. Rather than see the gas tax as transportation funding, pure and simple, **they have often stuck gas tax revenues into complicated budget-balancing plans.** Ronald Reagan, who later had his veto of a 5-cent gas tax increase overridden by Congress, earlier supported a temporary 5-cent hike in 1983 in a revenue package after his 1981 income tax cuts had put a mammoth hole in the budget. George Bush the elder also tried to shoehorn a gas tax hike into a budget bill, but Congress took it out. Bill Clinton pursued a carbon tax to combat global warming, but ended up with just a 4.3 cent gas tax increase in 1993 — an increase Republican Senate Leader Bob Dole predicted would be twice as large. As it happens, that 4.3 cent hike nearly 20 years ago was the last adjustment to the federal tax due to inflation; $1 in gas tax revenue at 1993 levels is only about 63 cents today. So it's not surprising that congressional attempts to reauthorize transportation funding resemble a magic act. The money's just not there. Little-known fact: The federal treasury is currently "loaning" the highway trust fund $50 billion annually. As a reason for increasing the federal deficit, this has no justification whatsoever. Since transportation politics is fairly bipartisan, you might think there would be hope for change, but there isn't. **Republicans are as absolutely opposed to gas tax increases, even to make up for inflation, as to any other kind of tax**. And the **Obama** administration **isn't about to call for a tax increase and expend scarce political capital.** So we're stuck. Until last year, things were a little better in Maine. The gas tax here has been raised periodically, and in 2002, at the end of the King administration, legislation indexed the rate to inflation. Most years the increase was less than a penny per gallon, but at least it prevented highway funding from steadily eroding. It wasn't easy to get there. The **legislation was unpopular among both Democrats and Republicans**, and then-House Speaker Mike Saxl used all his parliamentary skills to get it through. During the eight years it was in effect, Maine was able to make a small dent in its huge amount of backlogged road and bridge needs. Then Gov. Paul LePage and a Republican Legislature arrived and they spent about 15 minutes getting rid of a common-sense measure that took years to get through. There wasn't even a separate vote on repeal; it was tucked into the biennial budget bill without public discussion. So get used to more rusting bridges, crumbling highways and future closures. As Dana Connors, a former transportation commissioner who's now president of the Maine State Chamber of Commerce recently put it, "We simply can't do more with less. It just can't be done." We're now more reliant on revenue from the Maine Turnpike. Simply because it has the power to raise tolls independently — it's currently proposing a 25 percent increase that's more than 12 times higher than the annual gas tax indexing increments — the turnpike authority is acting while the Legislature buries its head in the sand. But turnpike tolls can't fund roads statewide. **Unless our elected leaders acquire an unexpected dose of pragmatism, post-election, this dubious story will continue.** Douglas Rooks has contributed to Maine editorial pages for 25 years, and writes for a variety of state, regional and national publications.

**Plan is massively unpopular --- GOP opposes for ideological reasons**

**Krohe, 12** (James, “Topping off the tank,” The Illinois Times, May 3rd, 2012, [http://www.illinoistimes.com/Springfield/article-9980-topping-off-the-tank.html)//AS](http://www.illinoistimes.com/Springfield/article-9980-topping-off-the-tank.html%29/AS)

As I understand it, **the Republican position on gasoline prices is to save drivers money by refusing to raise the excise tax on gasoline** that pays the federal share of building roads and bridges. As this will cause the road network to crumble, people will have to stop driving, thus saving them hundreds a year on fuel costs. And here I was, thinking that road funding was complicated. One of the virtues of the state sales tax as a revenue-raising tool is that sales tax receipts go up as prices go up, enabling the state to maintain its purchasing power in spite of inflation. This is not true of the federal gas tax, which is levied on a flat per-gallon basis. The federal gas tax is 18.4 cents a gallon, and has not gone up since 1993, when it was last adjusted. Unfortunately, the cost of building a new road has gone up since 1993, way up. As a result, road quality declines in the most car-dependent nation on earth, while delays and repair bills rise. Fixing this should be easy. Pensions get adjusted for inflation. **Congressional salaries get adjusted for inflation**. And the federal gas tax used to be adjusted too – four times since it was first imposed under the Eisenhower administration in 1956. Three of these adjustments were signed by Republican presidents, and all had broad support in both parties in Congress. Raising the federal gas tax enough to restore the purchasing power it had in 1993 would put the bulldozers back to work. Alas, remedying this inflation-induced tax decrease counts as a tax increase in the lexicon of this day. **The anti-tax jihadists among the Republicans will not vote for a tax increase for ideological reasons, the Democrats dare not for craven political ones. (A brave Wyoming senator – Republican Mike Enzi – proposed that Congress index the gas tax. Members reacted as if he’d tossed a dead rat on the table.)**

**Gas tax will be a political firestorm – it’s a non-starter**

**Shesgreen, 11** (Deirdre, “Next Congressional Crisis: The Federal Gas Tax?” The CT Mirror, August, 23rd, 2011, [http://ctmirror.org/story/13661/gastaxfight)//AS](http://ctmirror.org/story/13661/gastaxfight%29/AS)

WASHINGTON -- Talk about a bumpy road ahead. When Congress gets back to Washington next month, **lawmakers face a possible legislative pile-up over the federal gas tax**, an important source of funds to Connecticut and every other state with transportation infrastructure needs.

**That 18.4-cent levy on every gallon** expires on Sept. 30. And it **could quickly become a focal point for a fresh fight over taxes and spending, as lawmakers rev up the debate over debt reduction** this fall.

At the end of last year, President Barack Obama's bipartisan fiscal commission recommended a gradual 15-cent hike in the federal gas tax starting in 2013. Other debt-reduction groups have similarly looked at ways to shore up funding for the federal Highway Trust Fund, which currently does not take in enough revenue to cover the nation's transportation spending levels.

But **raising the gas tax is a non-starter in this Congress, where House Republicans, filled with Tea Party fervor, have opposed any tax increases**. And indeed, some **conservative groups have even signaled that they would like to see the gas nixed all together**, and they see the looming deadline as an opportunity to move in that direction.

"In general, we support the concept of eliminating the federal gas tax and letting the states fund transportation," said Barney Keller, a spokesman for the Club for Growth, an influential conservative group.

Keller said the Club has not taken any position on legislation to extend the current gas tax yet, because they first want to see what kind of long-term transportation bill Congress comes up with. That legislation will map out federal highway spending for the next several years, to be paid for by any extension of the gas tax.

Meanwhile transportation advocates are scrambling to shore up support for the gas tax and nervously eyeing the crunched congressional calendar.

"There are 11 legislative days in September before the current extension expires," noted Tony Dorsey, a spokesman for American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO). "That gives you a sense of the urgency of this. They've got to move."

Donald Shubert, a spokesman for Keep CT Moving, a transportation advocacy coalition, said he's asked Gov. Dannel Malloy's administration to consider pushing for a "safety valve" provision at the state level that would increase Connecticut's gas tax to compensate in case the federal gas tax lapses.

He noted that Tennessee has a statute on its books that automatically adjusts the state tax upwards if the federal tax declines or ends, so the state can maintain its transportation revenue stream.

"I'm hoping our governor's office will consider something like this," Shubert said, in case Congress deadlocks over the tax.

But Malloy's proposal in February to increase the 25-cent gas tax by 3 cents to shore up the state's own special transportation fund eventually was abandoned in the face of hostility by the state legislature.

Emil Frankel, a transportation commissioner for then-Gov. Lowell P. Weicker Jr. and now director of transportation policy at the Bipartisan Policy Center in Washington, said there's probably a clear majority in Congress that favors renewing the gas tax.

**"But that's not to say that majority will be able to work its will," he said. "There will be some kind of a battle over it. How serious is it, I don't know...  But one could imagine that there will be difficulties and obstruction and hurdles to the extension."**

**Gas Tax Elections Links**

**Gas tax unpopular with the public – obsessive penny-pinching.**

**Kimberlin, 12** (Joanne, “Tolls turmoil raises questions about Va. gas tax”, The Virginian-Pilot, the FHA, March 18, 2012, (http://hamptonroads.com/2012/03/tolls-turmoil-raises-questions-about-va-gas-tax)//AS

**Tax hikes are** rarely popular, but the **gasoline tax is particularly untouchable**, especially when pump prices are climbing on their own. **Elections can flip at the cost of a fill-up, an expense that's not only unavoidable, but impossible to ignore**. Giant signs flash the going rate outside every gas station.

**It all makes us hyper-aware**, said Carl Davis, a senior analyst at the nonprofit, nonpartisan Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy.

"**If bananas go up a penny or two, people don't notice**," Davis said, "**but they'll drive around - sometimes obsessively - trying to save that much on gas**."

**The mindset is reflected across the country**. **The average state hasn't raised its gas tax in over a decade**, and 14 have gone twice that long, leaving a wake of busted road budgets, rusting bridges, crippling congestion and an ever-increasing reliance on tolls to foot the bills.

**AT: Map-21 Thumper**

**Dems caved to GOP demands and it didn’t increase investment**

**Adler 7/3** – (Ben, Writer for The Nation, “This Is a Win? After Dems Cave, Transportation Bill Creates No New Jobs,” MSNBC, 7/3/12, http://leanforward.msnbc.msn.com/\_news/2012/07/03/12544141-this-is-a-win-after-dems-cave-transportation-bill-creates-no-new-jobs?lite) SIyer

The intransigence of Republicans in Congress has become so extreme that even bad results are now considered victories by Senate Democrats and the White House. Raising the debt ceiling—once a routine matter—while agreeing to painful spending cuts is the most prominent example. But a less-noticed one occurred last week. The Surface Transportation law, which determines how the federal government will disburse transportation infrastructure funds, is normally passed every six years, and it expired in 2009. It used to be a fairly simple matter: tally up the revenues from the gasoline tax, give 20 percent to mass transit, the rest to roads, and send it back to the states. But those days are long gone. Here's what happened this time around: We needed a transportation law that would meet the needs of our diverse population: more money for bicycling, walking and mass transit and more money for fixing crumbling roads and bridges—as well as a raise in the gas tax, which hasn't gone up for nearly two decades. So after taking office, President Obama, working with congressional Democrats, issued ambitious proposals to meet these goals. But Democrats were afraid to say how they would pay for them. Meanwhile, as Congress focused on other matters, such as health care reform, it passed a series of temporary extensions that just kept the current rules in place. Then in 2010 Republicans took over the House of Representatives and went to work on a right wing fantasy bill: They would eliminate dedicated funding for mass transit and eliminate environmental reviews for new projects, and tack on irrelevant measures such as building the controversial Keystone XL oil pipeline. Even the House Republican caucus was divided on this approach, and they could not get the votes to pass it. In the end, Senate Democrats and Republicans agreed on a compromise bill that would last two years, and the House passed a temporary extension of its own. But in reconciling the two bills, Democratic negotiators conceded far too much. The final bill, set for President Obama's signature, will **continue current overall funding levels**, but it includes compromises with the House GOP’s reactionary agenda, including eliminating funding for repairing existing infrastructure; cutting funds for making walking and biking safer; the removal of a measure that would have let cash-strapped transit agencies use federal funding to keep operations going; and cutting tax deductions for mass transit by half. And yet, both Sen. Barbara Boxer, the California Democrat who chairs the Environment and Public Works committee, and Secretary of Transportation Ray LaHood, are praising the bill, as if the mere act of continuing status quo funding is a great investment in economic stimulus. Boxer estimated it would save around 2.8 million jobs, through a mix of dollars for highway and transit construction, and federal loan guarantees to spur private investment. But that estimate assumes that the funding will otherwise disappear. If you use the current funding level as a baseline, the bill creates no new jobs at all. The number of jobs being created "is basically zero,” said Dean Baker, co-director of the Center for Economic Policy Research. “We would lose jobs if nothing had passed and Congress let funding lapse. Even then Boxer and Obama are hugely exaggerating the effects.” Smart growth advocates, too, say the bill is step in the wrong direction. “On the whole, the bill supports development styles which are losing popularity,” said Alex Dodds, spokeswoman for Smart Growth America. “Walkable downtowns are seeing a renaissance across the country, and transportation infrastructure is a huge part of that. The federal transportation bill could have supported these vibrant places much better. What the bill does support are projects that won't deliver as well on their investment.” LaHood described the bill as bipartisan. That's true if you define bipartisanship as Democrats—who control the Senate and White House—moving in the direction Republicans want. “I am so glad that House Republicans met Democrats half way, as Senate Republicans did months ago,” said Boxer. That sounds a lot like **Democrats moving three quarters of the way toward Republicans. Not exactly a result for Dems to brag about.**

**Only passed because of election year pressures specific to that bill --- the plan doesn’t have the same political cover**

**Reuters 6-28** – June 28, 2012 (John Crawley, staff writer for Reuters, and Roberta Rampton, editor for Reuters, “Congress to vote on compromise transportation bill”, Reuters.com) MG

**Congress took more than two years to reach the point of finalizing a transportation bill, and only because the potential consequences of inaction proved too risky in an election year.**

**The bipartisan blueprint was largely crafted by the Democratic-led Senate and was in line with White House expectations.**

**One of the most liberal senators worked with one of the most conservative to convince other lawmakers to accept the deal**, defying analysts who had predicted a short-term extension rather than a longer-term deal given the overheated political climate.

"This agreement provides stability and flexibility for the nation's transportation planners," said Democratic Senator Barbara Boxer, who chaired the negotiations, in a statement.

Senator James Inhofe, the top Republican on the Environment and Public Works Committee, has been credited with working with fiscally conservative House Republicans to find common ground.

"As with any compromise we didn't get everything we wanted, but I believe we truly have a good bill - one conservatives can be proud to support," Inhofe said.

The resolution was praised by business groups like the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. But environmental groups were unhappy that Republicans won some concessions on environmental reviews of highway projects.

**The bill maintains spending – not an increase**

**Bloomberg 6/29** – June 29, 2012 (“Highway Deal Leaves US Trust Fund In Bankrupting Cycle”, Bloomberg.com) MG

**The transportation bill maintains current spending levels through September 2014**, or **$94.3 billion for fiscal 2013 and 2014 combined, according to the Congressional Budget Office**. The federal gasoline tax won’t provide enough to cover that level of construction, so the bill uses $18.8 billion of general tax money to bridge the gap.

**Transportation bill only extends funding – the plan is an increase and marks a change from SQ**

**Reuters 6-28** – June 28, 2012 (John Crawley, staff writer for Reuters, and Roberta Rampton, editor for Reuters, “Congress to vote on compromise transportation bill”, Reuters.com) MG

**Transportation leaders** were at times convinced the gridlocked Congress was too divided to pass such a big bill without sweeteners so individual members could claim credit for infrastructure improvements in their states.

Their **priorities in the end were to simply maintain current funding and give states some certainty about the financial commitment from Washington**. States rely on federal transportation dollars to help them plan and carry out projects, especially road repairs.

**AT: Link Turn**

**No link turn -- partisanship means even the most routine policies take months of fighting and compromise.**

[**Steinhauer**](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/people/s/jennifer_steinhauer/index.html?inline=nyt-per)**, 12** (Jennifer, “The Formerly Routine Is Now the Tendentious,” The New York Times, March 24th, 2012, <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/03/24/us/politics/in-polarized-congress-routines-are-now-tendentious.html>)//AS

WASHINGTON — **Some things that Congress does are meant to be difficult: budgets, tax law changes, the**[**health care overhaul**](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/news/health/diseasesconditionsandhealthtopics/health_insurance_and_managed_care/health_care_reform/index.html?inline=nyt-classifier)**, the undoing of the health care overhaul. But there are a host of things that used to be almost routine that the 112th Congress has managed to make laborious and at times downright tedious** — **a departure from the traditional desires of members to pass legislation during an election year and claim accomplishments to trot out back home.**

Most recently, **Congress has been unable to agree on a highway bill — once a fairly simple exercise — to replace one that expires** at the end of next week. Should Congress fail to act, scores of construction projects around the country could be halted.

**This week, a bill to reauthorize the**[**Export-Import Bank**](http://www.sba.gov/content/export-import-bank-united-states)**— a self-financing agency that helps get American goods sold overseas — failed despite bipartisan and business community backing.** Without Congressional agreement by the end of May, the bank will lose its authorization and will hit its lending cap sooner.

**That legislation was wrapped up in a series of very modest jobs-related bills that passed the House overwhelmingly and were embraced by** President **Obama**. **Yet the Senate managed to drag that legislation into a weeklong fight over amendments intended to strengthen consumer protections**. Once it passed, everyone left feeling more resigned than victorious.

**Lawmakers blame a polarized Congress — reinforced by redistricting, which has pushed many members to the far edges of their respective parties for primaries** — **along with a lack of trust** among party leaders **and desire by both sides to rob each other of victories for combining to make it so.**

“**Everybody is afraid to give an inch**,” said Representative Steven C. LaTourette, Republican of Ohio, who is in his ninth term. **“Redistricting has added to the problem because you have people running to the right of you or if you’re a Democrat someone running to the left.”**

Democrats specifically cite conservatives in the House, whose desires to shrink government go beyond what Republicans have sought in the past, as the main impediments. “It’s an ideology that believes there is no role for the federal government in providing investments to make our economy strong,” said Representative Chris Van Hollen of Maryland.

It is a theme that Senator [Harry Reid](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/people/r/harry_reid/index.html?inline=nyt-per) of Nevada, the majority leader, has hit much of the year.

“As lousy the dancer as I am,” Mr. Reid said this week, “I would still rather do that than fight. But **all I get are opportunities to fight**. And I’ve avoided a lot of them. I’m going to continue to, as many as I can, because there are certain things we don’t need to fight over. We don’t need to fight over the highway bill, we don’t need to fight over Ex-Im Bank, and we don’t need to fight over a budget which we already have.”

**Republicans counter that Senate Democrats make everything worse by trying to duck difficult votes; the chamber has not passed a budget in three years.**

“I’d point to the lack of work by the Senate this whole entire year,” said Representative Cathy McMorris Rodgers, Republican of Washington. Further, they say, easy things used to be easy because there was more money, and members were bought off with treats for their states.

**“I think when it comes to things like the highway bill that used to be very bipartisan, you have to understand it was greased to be bipartisan with 6,371 earmarks,”** Speaker [John A. Boehner](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/people/b/john_a_boehner/index.html?inline=nyt-per) said this week, when asked why things were so gummed up. “**You take the earmarks away, and guess what? All of a sudden people are beginning to look at the real policy behind it. So each one of these bills will rise or fall on their own merits.”**

**The transit bill has been a particularly gruesome collision. The House**[**transportation**](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/subjects/t/transportation/index.html?inline=nyt-classifier) **committee passed its own version earlier this year, an ambitious five-year plan that would have ended the allotment that public transit usually receives from the highway trust fund and paid for some of the program with new money from drilling, a plan that alienated many Republicans.**

Mr. **Boehner** then more or less **committed to passing the**[**Senate’s two-year version of the bill**](http://www.nytimes.com/2012/03/15/us/politics/senate-passes-transportation-bill-putting-pressure-on-house.html), which was far more modest in scope, **before going on a week recess** this month. **When the House came back** this week, **that bill was suddenly no good**, with Republicans citing a lack of mechanisms in the bill to pay for it.

House Republicans now want a short-term extension and Democrats are balking. Without some form of extension, the federal government will stop collecting the [gas tax](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/subjects/g/gasoline_tax_us/index.html?inline=nyt-classifier) and the Highway Trust Fund will eventually run out of money, meaning highway projects would eventually be stopped.

The Ex-Im Bank extension is another migraine. It was last authorized in 2006, by voice vote in the House and unanimous consent in the Senate. But some conservatives now oppose the extension — although it is supported by the Chamber of Commerce and other business groups — preferring to dismantle the agency.

**Even a widely popular bill that passed the Senate this week to prohibit insider trading by members of Congress, which Senator Joseph I. Lieberman, independent of Connecticut, called “the most significant ethics legislation to pass Congress in years,” hit snags over amendment**s. Also true, with the collections of jobs bills this week. “**This place has been increasingly ideologically rigid,”** Mr. Lieberman said. “**It makes it impossible for it to function.”**

**AT: Winners Win**

**Legislative victories are zero sum – a win for Obama is a loss for the GOP.**

**Bouie, 12** (Jamelle, “Playing "What If" with Health-Care Reform,” The American Prospect, April 19th, 2012, <http://prospect.org/article/playing-what-if-health-care-reform>)//AS

Like almost every Democrat with claims to being a moderate, outgoing Virginia Senator Jim Webb doesn’t seem to [understand](http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/election-2012/post/jim-webb-health-care-law-represents-a-leadership-failure-for-obama/2012/04/18/gIQAIbKpQT_blog.html) that **partisan politics are zero-sum**:

What happened in the end, Webb said, “was **five different congressional committees voted out their version of health-care reform, and so you had 7,000 pages of contradictory information. Everybody got confused. … From that point forward, Obama’s had a difficult time selling himself as a decisive leader.**”

Webb also said that if Obama had opted for a smaller measure, he would have stood a chance of winning the support of a significant number of Republicans on Capitol Hill.

I have no doubt that Senator Webb maintains cordial relations with his GOP colleagues in the Senate; regardless, **it’s simply true that Republicans were opposed to advancing a health-care bill of any size, even after Democrats floated a smaller, compromise bill following Scott Brown’s win in Massachusetts**. It’s not hard to see why; **a bipartisan legislative victory for President Obama is a political victory for Democrats. Why would Republicans give them the advantage?**

I also want to second Scott Lemieux’s [take](http://www.lawyersgunsmoneyblog.com/2012/04/aca-second-guessing-from-the-right#.T5Ao_r8Cl30.twitter) on this; what Webb underscores—more than anything—is that **it took an enormous amount of political capital to pass health-care reform, given the degree to which many Democrats simply didn’t give a shit**:

The Webb/Frank critique is at least coherent — essentially, it’s that Obama’s mistake was trying to pass any kind of significant health care legislation, and continuing the status quo for another generation would have been fine. […] **You have no negotiating leverage over people who don’t care if anything passes**, **and Webb and the other conservative Democrats who held the balance of power in the Senate can’t even be bothered to pretend that they cared.**

Sometimes, I’m shocked by the fact that anything productive or worthwhile happened in the 111th Congress.