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# A Time for Balance

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MAP-21 introduced requirements for transit agencies and state and regional planning agencies to integrate safety, state of good repair and long-term trans¬portation planning. Since MAP-21's passage, FTA has introduced five rulemaking initiatives that would ¬create three new regulations and replace two existing ones in the areas of state safety oversight, safety certification, transit asset management and regional planning.

The FAST Act requires grantees to have a transit asset management plan, requires a national transit asset management system that includes a definition of state of good repair (SOGR) and makes an express link between a national public transportation safety plan and SOGR. Planning processes are now required to include performance-targets-based criteria addressing safety, infrastructure condition and reliability. As of yet, there is no express requirement that federal grants be used to meet performance criteria. However, federal grants can only be used for projects in a regional and state plan, which now must have measurable targets for these outcomes.

Federal law emphasizing long-term planning, funding, safety and infrastructure integration is a wise choice. It cannot become a Hobson's choice or a "take it or leave it" option. Public policy makers and the transit industry cannot let this needed emphasis on safety and infrastructure pit new projects against maintenance, growing areas of the country against older transit systems and safety against development.

Lawmakers and transit agencies have a unique opportunity to capitalize on the concurrent movements of urbanization and aging that have renewed the public's interest in transportation. The emphasis on safety and infrastructure maintenance must be balanced against the need to expand the availability of public transportation in new sectors, geographically and demographically.

Funding is needed to restore existing infrastructure while encouraging a tectonic shift away from single occupant vehicles to public transit and shared occupancy. Separate criteria are needed for new programs versus capital maintenance, and federal loan programs need to embrace projects and re-financings that may not result in ribbon cuttings but will free up agency funds.

As an industry, transit needs to find the creativity, funding and commitment for maintaining infrastructure that is in place and delivering more.