

# Transportation Librarians Roundtable-20240725\_140431-Meeting Recording

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58m 31s

● **Gansz, David (OST)** started transcription

**BC** **Bob Cullen** 0:04

There he is.

I see a red light now.

OK.

So we'll go ahead and get started.

Incidentally, Umm did just for clarification.

I Michael actually sent me an email.

I'm just a few moments ago with apologies and he doesn't need to apologize, but with the with.

With apologies for not responding to my request for any updates on he is in fact right now on the phone with the IT still trying to get the list serve resolved.

So I didn't wanna.

I want to mention that he wasn't ignoring less or anything.

He was quite the opposite.

He's working very hard for the community right now.

Just getting on things up and running again with the list you have, so stay tuned for those developments.

So for today's a TLR, this is an in a sense of renewal of something that we've done over the years.

We've had previous TLR's with Jong Lee and in his capacity as AASHTO's director of Policy and Government relations.

At those points in time and of course and this this specific type of Clr involves just providing legislative updates or more of the big picture.

You know what's going on?

I'm right there on Capitol Hill and at the national level with respect to transportation legislation.

I'm not necessarily just the nuts and bolts of what goes into the legislative process, but what's actually specifically happening with a legislative proposals measures that

that do indeed impact our transportation libraries community and those whom we serve and the person who will be leading us.

I'm.

I'm.

I'm through this challenging topic and serving as our speaker today is Susan Howard and again the title of this and her presentation today is federal transportation update and outlook and to the start up, I just like to share some biographical information about Susan.

This is her first time as a speaker for the TLR, so here's just some background about her.

Susan Howard serves as director of Policy and Government relations at the American Association of State, Highway, and Transportation Officials asked, though, which is a nonprofit, nonpartisan association representing transportation departments in the 50 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico.

Yeah, actually says that sounds like a very nice organization.

I might apply for a job there so.

**SH** **Susan Howard** 2:43

We'd love to have you.

**BC** **Bob Cullen** 2:45

Thank you.

That never heard that before.

So I was Susan.

Susan.

So and in her role at asked it works to advance the associations federal legislative and policy efforts, and she serves as a key liaison between AASHTO and Congress, the US Department of Transportation and other national organizations.

One thing that I certainly do wanna emphasize that that is emphasizes that Susan as a nationally recognized expert on transportation funding and she has appeared in that capacity on C-SPAN.

So that remains a professional highlight for her.

For the record, it's a professional, not the. It's a.

It's a personal highlight for me I'm a I'm A and unabashed C-SPAN, or I will actually use my down time to, to, to watch them.

See what's on C-SPAN.

It's especially with respect to the congressional hearing, so it was all the more thrilling to see I, our friend and colleague, actually, they're presented testimony doing so very, very effectively.

Umm it did my heart good.

And like I said, I like to watch what sees man has to offer anyway.

So.

So then I was indeed very impressed by your appearance there at that and the testimony you provided.

And one of these days, I'm gonna actually work up the courage when I see you in the hallway to ask for your autograph.

I have to work my way up to that.

**SH** **Susan Howard** 4:14

Wow.

Yeah.

Yeah, you.

Yeah, right, exactly.

**BC** **Bob Cullen** 4:16

I do.

OK, she confirmed that.

OK, so I did want to highlight a highlight that a part of what?

What she has done on behalf of the larger transportation community.

So moving on though is a start to wrap up this this introduction.

Susan previously held the position of program Director for Transportation, Finance and Program Manager for freight at ASH, though, and I just wanna say that my Astro colleagues and I are very fortunate to have her there to ask, though.

Which she's a wonderful person to work with and very knowledgeable too.

And I'm not just saying that's not just my opinion.

My own opinion, other people have told me that over the years I don't know if I've ever quite shared that with Susan, but she has a she has a reputation and it's a good reputation.

So we are very fortunate to have her as part of the Astro family and I will say that all of us here today are very fortunate to have her here to share her knowledge and her

insights about what is involved with federal transportation legislation these days. So without any further delay on my part, I would now like to hand the microphone over to Susan Howard.

The floor is all yours, Susan.

**SH** **Susan Howard** 5:43

Thank you, Bob, and thank you for that very kind introduction.

It's my pleasure to be here with you today.

To talk a little bit about some of the legislative initiatives that Azure is working on and what we might see coming forth in the future, we've been quite busy since the passage of the IIGA or the bipartisan infrastructure laws.

You can imagine, and we're already starting to gear up.

For what will come next with Surface reauthorization.

So we'll get to some of those topics in a moment.

I am sure that most of you are probably familiar with AASHTO in some capacity.

We, you know, most a lot of people who their first introduction to Ashwin, especially if they're on the engineering side is through one of our publications like the Green Book or the Materials Book.

We have a reputation, obviously at a national international level for those standards setting.

Publications and, you know, technical documents that we're kind of have the Astro brand so to speak, but we do a lot more than that as well.

We've been around for about 110 years.

As Bob mentioned, we represent the 50 state duties and we include Puerto Rico and DC in that we cover all modes of transportation.

Some people probably still think a lot about Astro is Rd builders.

And yes, that's, you know, part of what we do, but that's just a piece of it.

We, the safety of teams in general look very different now than they did 150.

20 or even five years ago, or constantly evolving to meet the needs of the transportation communities that we serve and focused on mobility and safety for all users.

Uh.

So if you wanna know, you know, to know a little bit about Ashley, I'll just also need to understand sort of our leadership structure every year AASHTO elects a new association President from among the state dots CEOs.

And this year, our President is Craig Thompson, who's secretary of the Wisconsin DOT.

Our Vice president is Garrett Euclidean, commissioner of Connecticut DOT.

Our treasurer is Russell McMurray of Georgia DOT and Jim Tymon is our executive director.

Each year, our President uh sets forth an agenda.

We call it the presidential emphasis areas and we really try to use those emphasis areas to drive our work each year.

So these are not these are not new topics.

These are topics that Azure has worked on for a long time, but our president each year kind of chooses some areas to focus or shine a light on and that helps drive our work.

And I'll talk about how that translates to the legislative side as well.

But President Thompson is focusing on three big things.

Umm.

Safety.

Maximizing federal investments and building the transportation workforce in terms of safety.

Uh, our president is really prioritizing safety for all users of our system, especially vulnerable Rd users.

This is being tackled through opportunities for our Members to share best practices, cross training communication strategies, implementing new, existing and cutting edge behavioral and engineering countermeasures.

And so we have really put a focus on that particularly last few years because of the dramatic spike in fatalities of Rd users.

Maximizing federal investment means making the most of the historic funding allotted in the infrastructure, investment and JOBS Act.

Umm, that means strengthening communication between state duties and our federal partners, providing feedback on the impact of federal guidance to the state dots and our partners sharing strategies for helping local communities meet their needs.

When it comes to federal resources for successful grant applications, just all the discretionary grant opportunities that were provided through the IJA and addressing issues that might stand in the way of delivering all of the resources made available in the IIGA to improve the quality of life for our communities.

Lastly, we're all aware that the transportation workforce is experiencing some major shifts.

We're seeing it in our dots, as many of our existing workforces getting close to retirement age.

Newer employees are not staying within their organizations as long as they may have.

In the past, many industries obviously are facing this, and we're seeing fewer and fewer candidates for open positions.

And so really, our President is focused on, you know, looking at opportunities for workforce training, supporting state DOT efforts to advance more equitable transportation system through diversity.

And looking at the impact even of AI on the state DOT workforce, so a lot of emerging issues, even as I mentioned before, things that we've worked on for a long time, but because of technology, because of advancement, we're looking at things a little differently now.

So what is the role of policy and government relations at AASHTO?

So I'm the head of our policy relations division.

We have a staff of about 16 and we work primarily on federal regulations and policy at the legislative level.

We, I would say like to divide my division into sort of verticals we have, we handle all the multimodal transportation, air or aviation rail, public transportation, water transportation, we handle environment, sustainability and resilience.

We handle planning, performance based management and data and we also handle civil rights, equity and agency administration as well as active transportation.

So we have quite a big footprint.

I guess our work differs a little bit from the engineering side and that we are dealing more with policy and programming and ideas than we are with the specifications of the engineering side.

But as I say to my colleagues in those different divisions in our safety and mobility and operations and our engineering divisions, they do policy even if they don't realize they do policy.

So we all work very closely together to advance the state DOT priorities up here in Washington.

So this has benefit to our Members.

I mean, we're a membership association, so our work on Capitol Hill to advocate for

causes that are important to our Members is a key part of what we do.

And a key part of why our Members rely on us, we'll talk a little bit shortly about the, you know, the transportation infrastructure law.

But AASHTO was real, essential, and our members were real, essential and critical in getting that bill passed back in 2021 with that historic funding level.

And it's, you know, really been a huge I'm focus area of us for the last three years now.

Almost three years we're able to do that because we are able to provide the state.

Duty perspective on a lot of different issues when it comes to the federal program and programs, we work really hard to establish relationships with congressional offices, committee staff, our federal partners, and we spent a lot of time getting input from our Members about how specific rulemakings or legislative proposals will affect the work of the state DOT.

I'm not lobbyist.

I'm not a registered lobbyist.

We don't have a political action committee.

We're not that type of advocacy organization, but we do provide, I would say, you know, best practices information state dot perspective on different legislative vehicles are out there and we do develop, you know, policy priorities.

But our lobbying probably looks a little different than some other industries in the sense that, you know, we represent public sector agencies and we were really focused on just delivering the message of what the state DOT role can be.

We also work to build relationships with peer associations.

Groups like the National Conference of State Legislators, the National Association of Counties, National Governors Association, on and on and on the Mpos Ampo the Mpos it goes on and on and on.

But again, with the policy relationship policy, government relations team, a lot of that work is sort of on where the intergovernmental side of meets the federal state local partnership.

So we do a lot of focus there.

I'm a big part of what we do is responding to rulemaking by federal agencies.

So that's been a big focus for us the last couple of years with the CIA.

And I'll talk a little bit more about that as we go forward.

Every year we also put out a policy action agenda.

We put this out in the beginning of the year, making sure it's in the hands of our

Members when they come to DC for our annual Washington briefing, which is usually in February.

And so this is what those priorities looked like for 2024 ohm.

I won't get into the details of August restriction, but if you know, you know, Wink, Wink, that that's a very technical issue with in terms of redistributing obligation limitation that has not been obligated getting it into the hands of state to teams to spend before the end of the fiscal year.

There's numbers have been going up and up and up.

It's gotten increasingly volatile, to the point that there's \$8.7 billion that states are going to obligate between now and the beginning of the fiscal begin the end of the fiscal year, which is a lot to absorb.

So we're working on legislative fixes to try to make that process more streamlined and more better.

But it's true.

It's, you know, Azure better outcomes for the whole program.

We've had a real big focus on IG discretionary grants and recommendations to streamline the process and improve administration of those grants.

As you all know, there's a bit, just a bit much larger universe of discretionary grants made available through the IGA with also a large, much larger group of eligible recipients.

So many of our states are working very hard with their local partners to ensure that they're targeting their efforts when they apply for grants towards projects that can be realized, you know, got the match there.

Preliminary work is done.

It's gonna meet all the federal requirements because again, given the amount of funding that's available to discussion against, we want to make sure that those funds can get obligated and are really delivering on what the promise of the IJA was.

Build America by America has been a huge policy issue for Ashdod since the passage of the IJA and the changes to the existing biomerica requirements for construction materials, manufactured products and then as sort of special carve out category for electric vehicle infrastructure for charging stations.

So we've been working really closely on that have written, I can't even recall probably somewhere between half a dozen and a dozen comment letters to USDOT, Federal Highway Administration, particularly on implementation of the by America build America, Buy America requirements in the IJA.



And finally, we're always looking to ways to streamline and coordinate and the permitting process.

And this year, a particular interest was that partnership between the state dots and the railroads.

When it comes to those kind of right of way issues and, umm, flagging efficient environmental project and project outcomes, so we've been working on that as well. So we'll be developing this again in the next few months for 2025 and we it, you know, when it boils down to it, it turns out to be sort of a you know, A2 fold thing that we can take up to Capitol Hill.

Our Members can take to Capitol Hill to kind of synthesize ashes priorities for that year.

So let's talk a little bit about the IGA, which again has been the largest infrastructure. Bill that I've ever worked on and I've, you know, I've been doing this for.

I don't want to say how many years, roughly more than 15, less than 20 working on Capitol Hill working on federal legislation and then working for safety OT and in this role it's, you know as everybody knows it's a historic investment in all forms of infrastructure, particularly on the DOT side, about 567 billion in Highway trust fund and general fund resources.

Umm, one thing that was unique about the IGA and again this this kind of gets into the color of the money and the specifics and it, it does matter to those of us that work in the in the program really directly and 184 billion was provided in advance general Fund appropriations for infrastructure that that's sort of above and beyond authorization funding from the Federal Trust Fund.

And so that was a unique funding stream for this bill, and it's not clear if it will continue beyond the IGA, but certainly a lot of programs and new initiatives have been funded through that Advanced General Fund appropriations.

And it's been essentially guaranteed funding.

It's as close as you can get to guaranteed funding by having it be advanced appropriations, meaning the appropriations committees in the House and Senate don't have to really find the money themselves.

It's provided by law in advance.

That's essentially what advance appropriations mean.

UM, so since the bill passed in 2021, states have been putting UM dollars to use in projects across all the different modes, and trying to demonstrate the public demonstrating the benefit to the public that comes with multiyear funding.

So multiyear funding is always Astros primary focus and it comes to a Surface reauthorization bill.

You have to have at least five years of funding to be able to effectively plan and program.

Uh.

Anything lasts is extremely disruptive and difficult to handle, so that's always gonna be one of our main priorities in looking at a longer term bill.

So thematically, some of the things that we have worked on a great deal during, I JA implementation the 1st that we mentioned are some of the new initiatives and partnerships, one of which being the focus on electric vehicles through the National Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Program.

This is a formula program that every state gets is getting dollars to build out.

Uh charging stations, according to sort of the guidelines put out by UM US DOT in terms of the frequency and the location.

So, you know, we're looking at to sort of 50 miles from no more, no 50 miles apart and no less than a no more.

I'm sorry than a mile from the Interstate or the National Highway system.

So the idea is to build a national network that drivers can rely on if they're on road trips, crossing state lines that charge publicly available charging will be easy to find and accessible.

So the NEVY program is working to that.

To do that through every single state, and it's been a lot of, it's been a really interesting and challenging journey, I think in mainly in the sense that it's just a role that safety of teams haven't necessarily always played many of our states did a lot with EV charging and construction with her, see energy offices or even their governor's offices.

But for it to be a state DOT responsibility under Title 23 has been different.

So we've been working really closely with the Joint Office of Energy, UH, and Transportation, which is a new entity set up largely to help with this and the other discretionary grant programs associated with electric vehicle and alternative fuels to implement that program.

As I mentioned by America changes, that's also been a huge focus for us.

We, you know, saw big shifts in the IJA in terms of what materials would now be required to be by American oil compliant.

And Allstate duties are 100% in support of Onshoring domestic manufacturing and

bringing those materials to US production.

We've had some challenges with the implementation and making sure that we can do this in an effective way that won't impact project delivery dramatically either by price or time.

And so that's been a big area of focus for us and working with our partners at US DOT, we have been extremely busy with responding to policy and program development through request for information, notice of proposed rulemaking and request for comments on a variety of topics.

And you can find all of those on our website.

We've probably done this is probably add a date.

At this point, we've probably done well over 50 comment letters since IJJA enactment on everything from Advanced Research to environmental product declarations to passenger rail implementation across the board.

That's been a real big focus whenever a large multiyear transportation bill with lots of policy comes out.

There's always, you know, the you spend years kind of getting the policy in place.

And so that's been a big focus for all of us in the stakeholder community is sort of making sure that the policy that's in the IJA can be implementable and that the regulations that are written are reflective of the best practices out there.

So now we turn our attention to IJ, a reauthorization which we seems far away but really isn't that far away because the IJ will expire in about 2 years on September 30th of 2026, actually always get started early.

And so one of our biggest priorities right now is working on our recommendations for the follow up bill to the current federal Surface transportation infrastructure law.

The IA, umm, you know, one of, as I mentioned earlier, one of our presidential emphasis areas this year is maximizing investments from the IGA.

So that's, you know, that's important not only for putting the money to work, to help improve people's lives, but to show that we, as state your teams, are good stewards of those dollars in preparation for the next bill.

If we want to make a case for continued level investment, like the IJ has, we've got to make sure that we are putting our best foot forward and being good stewards and having a strong responsibility and execution of those of those dollars.

Uh, we have again, as I said, sort of.

Uh started this process.

Our goal is to have our policy recommendations done a year before the bill expires,

so that would be September 30th of 2025.

We really think getting out early and talking about the state DOT priorities will help inform how Congress and the administration shapes the follow up to the IJA we rely on our committee structure, which you may be familiar with but actually has a number of standing committees and councils that help us develop policy, share best practices and all that, and it basically our structure sort of mirrors what a state dot does.

And we have a home for all of those functions within our committee structure.

So we're leaning on our committee structure to help us develop surface reauthorization priorities.

Yes.

So the first phase of our process is underway.

We're developing 8 white papers here and with a goal I mean they're actually the drafts are actually due to me next month, and we've divided them into eight different sort of buckets, topics that we want to cover.

Umm.

And you can see them here.

Uh, they're designed to be sort of cross cutting, not just one mode specific, but if they are recommendations that crossover, you know, highways transit, umm, public transportation, active transportation, etcetera, we can we want to make sure that the our recommendations reflect that.

So for example, my I'm the liaison to the Committee on funding and finance, so our papers #2 the funding, finance and program structure one.

And so we've been working to identify.

One we started with just looking at what we recommended for the follow up to the FAST Act, which ended up being that I JA and seeing what if that seemed still felt relevant, what if it, what if it needed to be tweaked, what happened with the IGA that we feel now we need to address and so we're all working internally to get those white papers developed and put them before our transportation policy forum which is our kind of overarching policy group at the AASHTO annual meeting in October in Philadelphia.

So we have a big, you know, at the end of our process, we'll have a lot of recommendations, but we did try to boil it down back in 2019 in advance of the expiration of the Umm Fast Act to kind of some high level core policy principles for reauthorization.

And we actually ended up getting all these except #2 as, which is really kind of one of the big question marks when it comes to the next bill.

When it comes to.

Sustainable revenue for the Highway Trust Fund.

We obviously have not gotten there.

The IA relied on billions of dollars of general fund revenue transfers to keep the Highway Trust fund solvent for the life of the bill, as well as those general fund appropriations and advanced appropriations.

So we're gonna have to look at reauthorization and consider kind of what funding level we expect from the bill and what are some mechanisms that could be used to reach that goal.

So when it comes to number one, we did have umm, you know, we did have a little bit about a year between the expiration of the FAST Act and when the IJA was signed into law.

But we had a yearlong extension that provided stability.

We didn't face a number of short term disruptive extensions like we have in some reauthorization.

So we would like to continue that.

We hope the bill comes on time, but if it doesn't, we wanna make sure that we have as long of an extension as we can get to avoid those sort of, you know, few weeks or few months disruptive extensions umm #3 was related to formula based funding.

Obviously that's the bread and butter for the state DOT and in this in the IGA over 90% of Hwy Trust Fund revenue did go into formula based funding for the states.

We were supportive of improvements to project delivery flexibility and harnessing innovation and technology, and we felt like the IGA, Umm met that, met those goals as well.

So we'll go through a similar process for our reauthorization recommendations.

We'll arrive at some high level policy priorities like these, and it sort of instructive just to see kind of where we landed in 2019 as we start to think about what the successor to IJA might look like.

So when it comes to that long term sustainable revenue option.

Oh wait, did I do this backwards?

We get back.

I don't if I can get back.

Oops, I went back too far.

I'm so sorry.

I apologize.

I'm not sure.

Oh, maybe I can do this.

Can I go back like this?

Yes.

OK, so one thing I'll just say about the UM, the revenue side of things, just to give you a perspective on what we're, what we look at the Congressional Budget Office is the CBO is really the entity that we rely on.

Uh, who makes projections UM to estimate when the Highway trust fund balances will be exhausted and how much will be needed to pay for A5 year Bill.

So right now the estimate is that the next five year authorization bill, if we're going to keep it at IJA levels would require 143 billion in additional Highway Trust fund revenue to continue at current levels and to continue that general fund advance appropriations.

That was such a key part of kind of getting the IGA to the size that it was.

That's gonna require 195 billion over the next five years, so we have some significant funding challenges and you know, Asher's gonna have to work to determine whether we're gonna advocate for continuing those general fund advance appropriations and if so, at what level.

Uh, you know how?

How?

What will the makeup and the funding structure look like for a follow up to the IGA as everyone will want to advocate for the, you know, no less than the IJA provided us moving forward?

A few other things that I would mention that we're working on legislatively.

One is the water Resources Development Act reauthorization.

Congress is now on a time frame of doing that reauthorization every two years, and again, this is for largely Army Corps of engineer projects, but many of them involve important water transportation resources and across our country, at our at ports, inland ports.

Ah Lakes and other waterways, rivers and waterways.

So we work closely on that.

Our Council on water transportation works closely on that, and the House passed its bill last.

I think we believe on Monday and the Senate is it's passed through committee.

So the 2024 bill will in all likelihood get fingers crossed, get enacted.

Before the end of the fiscal year and that will help sort of set the course for the Army

Corps of Engineer for the next two years in terms of project priorities and scope,

freight rail safety has been a big issue obviously since the.

Uh, tragic.

Freak derailment in East Palestine.

Ohio.

Umm the NTSB report is out and there has been interest on the hill in doing a freight rail safety bill.

However, it does not seem to be coalescing quite as it would perhaps need to in the

House there was a hearing just this week on that in the House, and I don't know that

the leadership of the committee is totally bought in on the proposal that's out there

to make some changes to freight rail safety and operations at this point.

But we'll see what happens.

Another hot topic I think, is obviously improving safety for all Rd users, given the

high number of fatalities that we're seeing on our roadways and so looking across, I

think that that's looking across the entire project lifecycle.

I think in terms of design planning, funding, all that, those aspects such expect that

to be a big issue moving forward in the next reauthorization workforce.

We talked about a little bit that also I think is a huge issue for our industry and trying

to build a resilient transportation.

I'm sorry, I've got my two confused.

We do wanna resilient workforce, but the first was resilient transportation so.

The IGA established 2 new formula programs where one really one on carbon reduction and one called protect, which is focused on transportation resilience.

So our states have been very busy meeting the requirements for those new programs that require plans that strictly the resilience plans that each state had to do.

And then the carbon reduction dollars are also involved, a pretty significant local distribution.

So we've been working tirelessly to get those programs off the ground and that has

been a big focus for at the federal level as well as at the states on resilience given all

of the extreme weather and challenges that we have in making sure that our

infrastructure can be resilient to those challenges from all different types of sources

of disaster, so to speak.

And then finally, the workforce piece that I mentioned earlier.

Umm.

Really wanting to make sure that we are investing in our workforce, the one we currently have and then how to grow that workforce for the future, just support transportation.

So those are some of the other kind of hot topics on the legislative front.

I would say that every day something new kind of comes up.

So we work a lot with our particularly congressional committees as well as individual member offices to help answer their questions about how the federal program works, what the inner intersection is between the federal, umm side of things and the safety of and our local partners so much more to come on some of these as well as we get moved closer to reauthorization.

So those were my slides and I'm going to stop now to make sure that we have some time for questions alternate over, I guess to David and Bob again.

Thank you.

**BC** **Bob Cullen** 34:42

Thank you.

Excellent presentation, Susan.

Really appreciate it and.

This is Susan.

Of course has done an effective job handling with has strikes me as a thunderously comprehensive topic, which she's made it of very easy to at least speaking for myself to get one's arms around and just better appreciate what constitutes all the many move moving parts of 1 comprehensive area of concern there.

So I'm so thank you.

And New York and.

And Susan, you're also one of my favorite types of TLR speakers because along with sharing a wealth of information with us, you've also allowed ample time for the remainder of the hour for the opportunity for questions and comments.

**SH** **Susan Howard** 35:27

That's not.



**BC** **Bob Cullen** 35:29

So thank you for that.

**SH** **Susan Howard** 35:31

Yes, absolutely.

**BC** **Bob Cullen** 35:32

So if anybody has any questions or comments for Susan, I'm you know, please let me know.

Just do the electronic show of hands and I will be happy to call on you.

And if I don't seem to be acknowledging you, the don't be shy about unmuting and just getting my attention that way.

But again, I'll keep an eye out.

Umm.

For, for, for, for any show of hands I would like to get the ball rolling here I guess.

Well, among other things, Susan, I do appreciate.

And I'm somebody that I'm Speaking of somebody whose work there at AASHTO for quite a few years now.

But I really appreciate your really I'm getting what strikes me as the most effective comparison if you will between engineering and policy that that policy is indeed about the programs and policies and the ideas engineering the engineering side of Astro of course is focused on a lot of the technical aspects but I'd like what how the way you took that a step further saying in a sense engineering is about policy arguably just across the board you know not even those of us who are not in the policy division somehow.

Another have policy into the mix.

There it's one of those things that just can't.

It can't be avoided if they if, if anybody, would want to avoid them.

And so I really appreciate your you're really emphasizing that point.

So thank you for that.

I did want to.

Yeah, there's not another good another sign of a good presentation is that it encourages or brings to mind quite a few other questions that really I think jumpstarts at that kind of sense of curiosity.

But I guess I guess for starters I just wanna go ahead and well, I'll start off with this. You did talk about the Congressional Budget Office, CBO and the numbers you get from them.

It sounds like that they are indeed, so I've, but if, if not the primary source, certainly a leading source and all that, I and I, I just want, I just want to get a sense for us all to make sure I'm on the right track there.

I'm very briefly, none, none.

None, not, not.

Not to take too much advantage of the trust and portion here, but I, unlike you, I have not worked on Capitol Hill or at the federal level.

I did work for a few years at the state level and specifically for Maryland State, state law lawmaker and umm I that that, that, that that was my education.

That was a smaller pond, but you know, in the equally important pond and its own way.

And that was my immersion into everything from keeping track of the policy and the issues, but also more specifically for the person for whom I work, preparing testimony for his bills and all of that and some bills were easier than others to characterize and to get the specifics about one and one thing I found very helpful because first of all I was never one to really I mean I can do it to some extent better now but at the time was I trying to trying to prepare a test.

Based on the bill itself, those bills can be kind of confusing, but one source that was very helpful for me where the fiscal notes they had there, the fiscal notes of course were prepared primarily just to give the financial breakdowns involved with the numbers that that constituted part of whatever legislative proposal.

I found them helpful there also found them actually more helpful than just about anything else and actually describing what the bill itself did, particularly the more technical ones there.

**SH** Susan Howard 39:10

Umm.

**BC** Bob Cullen 39:12

So I became very much a big fan of physical notes at that point in my in in my career I was wondering if and I guess that's my roundabout way of asking if you find you and your team find CBOE helpful in that regard and also if there are any other

sources that you find yourself relying on for the unbiased, helpful up-to-date information that you need to draw upon.

**SH** **Susan Howard** 39:39

Great question.

Thank you.

Thank you, Bob.

Yeah, I every piece of legislation is required to be scored by CBO.

So we do rely a lot.

Members of Congress rely a lot and the rest of us do as well.

To understand the fiscal impact of any particular proposed legislative vehicle, and oftentimes that impact is administration like what is it gonna take to set this up and keep this running within a federal agency or whoever you know the law is targeted to.

**BC** **Bob Cullen** 39:58

In.

**SH** **Susan Howard** 40:11

So yes, we do rely on them for that.

They're the how do we trust our projections come out as part of a bigger, you know, fiscal outlook couple times a year and that's really the gold standard when it comes to looking at the revenue side and where the Highway Trust Fund is, other sources that we look to a lot within our own kind of network, UM, the National Association of State Budget Officers, I rely on a lot for the state piece too because even though you know no project that's federally funded is I shouldn't say no, but very few federal projects are going.

Be 100% federal dollars, right?

There's always, you know, a state share or a local share.

And so the state side of funding is goes hand in hand with the federal side.

So even though Ashu doesn't do state policy or state legislative work, we did, you pay attention to what's going on in our state legislatures and the funding proposals that come out.

And so we work a lot with groups like ARTBA has a great public finance and transportation funding kind of research arm that we work with and a lot of other

groups as well.

So definitely information is real, important and 11 resource that you all may be familiar with from this group is the Azure 50 state report, which is the basically how every state pays for transportation.

I believe Jamie has perhaps spoken to you all before about that initiative.

That's a project we do every five years or so.

That is extremely comprehensive and didn't exist anywhere else, but those are the kind of things that we need because we get asked all the time about either from the hill, from our Members, from other, from CTO's about, like how if we wanted to do this, how would we do it?

And so you know that that crosses over all of AASHTO, but particularly in the policy and funding side that that's a big a great resource too.

**BC** **Bob Cullen** 42:03

Think great.

Thank.

Thank you.

I appreciate that and I have found and a somewhat limited way, but over the years I've found CBO to be a very good source too, particularly when I had to track down the those numbers.

So I can really appreciate that on an even larger, more consistent scale, I can.

I can see why that's a helpful, helpful resource.

And thank you also for mentioning the 50 state report.

I was actually gonna work that into the introduction, but I know that you and the other people at policy, I think, of course about Jung and also Jen Bracket on one occasion have given presentations and that I know last year you helped facilitate somebody who worked on the report on behalf of asked to give a presentation.

**SH** **Susan Howard** 42:36

Yep.

**BC** **Bob Cullen** 42:44

So that's that.

Those have always been worthwhile presentations, so thank you for that.

I'm glad it's not nothing that's gonna fall by the wayside.  
Like you said, another four or five years.

**SH** **Susan Howard** 42:54

What?

What?

Yeah.

Wait, I guess it came out in 20.

I'm looking at it right now.

I think it I think it came out in 2022.

So we would, it would probably we probably do it post reauthorization, get let us get through authorization and then we'll try to do it again.

**BC** **Bob Cullen** 43:09

OK.

Well, that's good looking, looking forward to that.

And of course, as always, we can see about another TLR presentation, but those have been very worthwhile presentations and that's one example of how the policy folks there, you, you and your policy colleagues have made a difference for the better with the TLR over the years too.

So I'm glad you mentioned it because it completely escaped my mind.

That's what happened.

So I don't write these things down, so thank you.

Umm, so I do see we do have a question here are or somebody who has something to say and share and it's Carol Marcus from the RTAP library and go ahead Cara.

**CM** **Cara Marcus** 43:53

OK, I'm gonna lower my hand.

**BC** **Bob Cullen** 43:58

Uh.

**CM** **Cara Marcus** 44:00

Umm, that was great to hear about all you've done and are going to do.

I subscribe to a number of AASHTO newsletters, and one of them is the Daily

transportation update.

I usually find something every single day, the weekly one that comes out on Fridays, and Rebecca Angers the formerly Umm top.

**SH** Susan Howard 44:22

Umm.

**CM** Cara Marcus 44:24

Are there any other newsletters from AASHTO you would recommend to really stay on top of what the organization is doing?

**SH** Susan Howard 44:24

Umm.

Great question.

Yes, umm, we have quite a few.

I mean a several of our uh, you mentioned our transit cert service program, our technical service program, several of our technical service programs have newsletters like that.

Environmental management has one it's just been rebranded.

I think it's called the Leaf now.

Uh, we have one for.

I know we have planning and a performance space management one, so there are quite a few of those.

I'd say if you have a specific policy interest and maybe we have a list of them somewhere that I'm not aware of, but it can help connect you with, umm, with, with the topical area. Umm.

**CM** Cara Marcus 45:15

And then give them to Barb.

And then when he posts the slides, they could also be given the resources.

**SH** Susan Howard 45:17

Umm.

Yeah, yeah, yeah, absolutely.

I think we probably have that and can draw upon that to get that to the group.

But yeah, we do have several of those that fund regular updates on policy regulatory also just or what state of the practice, what state do your teams are doing and certainly would encourage everybody to also subscribe to our daily transportation update and our Astro Journal, which are phenomenal resources for what's happening at the state and federal level.

**CM** **Cara Marcus** 45:42

Let me.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Yeah, that those will be helpful resources.

Appreciate it.

**SH** **Susan Howard** 45:59

Yeah.

Thank you for the question.

**BC** **Bob Cullen** 46:01

We thank you.

Thank you, Carol.

Appreciate it.

So by my clock here we got about another 8 to 10 minutes to go.

So again, just let me know if I'm there.

Any questions, comments.

I'm.

I'm for Susan and I'll help with the facilitation with, with, with you and Carol had just been numb.

Talking about there, one of the things and I'll take advantage of this interim right here to bring this up.

I think a couple of things that jumped out of me, Susan, during your presentation, they were talking about in terms of some of the programs and priorities.

First of all, was about and AI and within the transportation state DOT and I know.

I know that's something to ask, though certainly been addressing and focusing on and something that the Transportation libraries community in particular has been

really trying to trying to again, again, I'll use the phrase again trying to get arms around that too.

**SH** **Susan Howard** 46:55

Hmm.

Yes.

**BC** **Bob Cullen** 47:03

So, so, so.

So I think that's I think I really appreciate your having highlighted that of the other thing too though is also was also the matter of work for some the workforce of today and tomorrow and that's something as always that that that the Community here really has some that's a strong level of involvement and interest in and for example succession planning it's something that we've been trying to address over the course of this of this year so far we had an open discussion of an annual open discussion.

**SH** **Susan Howard** 47:33

Hmm.

**BC** **Bob Cullen** 47:42

Forum back and I guess it was in February, February or March and the succession plan was something that came up with some of the people who had the platform that it just talked about concerns and activities as a follow up that I just last month of the previous TLR did put a spotlight on succession planning.

Exactly what librarians can do to do the to help their organizations well with those efforts.

In Cara, who of course had the fall just a few moment.

Moments, moments ago took part in that in that session and basically, but discussing what she has done with her colleagues there and preparing those resources and that kind of thing to help really help those individuals or coming through the pipeline and just getting them more.

I don't know if acclimated, so the right word, but just getting them I'm making sure that the more integrated pretty early on within, within the organization and the culture and all that and carry the great job there.

I shared a few slides to more so on than the knowledge management part of the



equation there anyway though as far as the workforce and of today and tomorrow which you highlighted, I guess it was like the one of the last within the last couple of slides there.

**SH** **Susan Howard** 48:57

Uh-huh.

**BC** **Bob Cullen** 49:09

Umm is.

Is there anything you have to forgive me?

I work at ASH.

I shouldn't smoke no more.

More about this, anything in and anything in particular that, that, that, that is really being pursued, their succession planning, something I think it sounds like equity is certainly is something that's being emphasized.

**SH** **Susan Howard** 49:22

Sure.

Sure, sure.

Yeah.

So I think that, UM, a couple things that there's I think there's sort of the it's sort of two folders are of the internal like current state DOT employee workforce development and like you said succession planning, I see a lot of challenges with that in my own sort of like area of expertise which is the funding and finance space because the particulars of federal funds management are extremely nuanced and your teams within your agencies that do that.

Umm, it's a skill set that has to be learned.

I think it.

I don't know that you know learning how to use Sheamus and learning how to track and program federal dollars is like anything you can learn on the street and then come in.

So I think that, you know, making sure that there's a robust.

Like, yeah, like you said, succession planning was sort of like onboarding, but more than just onboarding, but like a longer term, you know kind of pathway to getting to getting those folks trained has been a big issue.

So there's sort of the internal stuff.

Then there's sort of the external stuff like how do we attract workers to our industry? How do we make the case that how do we build a new generation of engineers and so a lot of our states do really a lot of innovative partnerships with historically black colleges and universities with mentoring programs and internship programs to try to build that capacity and sort of get that spark going of like why you know why it's great to work for a public sector agency.

I think that's part of it too.

So I think we've looked at it from kind of all facets.

And again, when you mention I mean AI is still something.

I'm really still also trying to understand how it could benefit our state duties and our members at the same time that it could, you know, whatever challenges it poses and how you have to tread sort of carefully.

So I think we've been looking pretty, pretty widely when it comes to workforce.

But I think I think we're Azure is really focused is sort of the uh, internal and sort of unique safety OT challenges that we have.

Recognizing that the whole industry is facing this as well and that there's partnerships that we can have with other groups, the contractors, you know, the consultants, the engineers, the folks that are mean, we delivering more of the projects from that side of it and then you know trying to find innovative ways to bring more people into our agencies and hopefully convincing them that it's worthwhile to stay to stay a while.

**BC** **Bob Cullen** 52:12

OK, great.

Thank you.

Thank you.

You certainly to have very effectively addressed my address.

My question there and just what is going on with respect to the those very vital workforce issues and I was thinking after I asked you about what the workforce issues like gosh darn it, I should I should have asked about AI too, but I'm glad you worked that into your it, so you're gonna.

**SH** **Susan Howard** 52:38

I'm still trying to figure out if anybody can figure out where I think we're really trying

to, you know every.

Every now and then, technology, you know, kind of bifurcates and you, you have to pay attention.

And I feel like a is one of those things that I don't wanna pay attention to it, but I have to.

I need to I need to understand it and so I think we're all kind of in that phase here when it comes to figuring out where with an Ashe, it should be best be, it should best be addressed, how our Members are using it effectively.

**BC** **Bob Cullen** 52:58

Joe.

Yeah.

**SH** **Susan Howard** 53:08

And you know again, so I think we're gonna have a lot of content and sharing of best practices on that in the in you know the months and years to come as it becomes more and more predominant.

**BC** **Bob Cullen** 53:22

Absolutely yes.

And yeah, when we we've been collectively and individually, the transportation libraries community, we've really been trying to get further up the learning curve there and we have some people who are really making some significant headway there.

I don't even know if she's here, but Enid White from Wyoming DOT really has.

**SH** **Susan Howard** 53:40

That's good to know.

**BC** **Bob Cullen** 53:43

Does she gave an excellent presentation?

A couple of months ago with and talking about a lot about what's going on at the federal level with respect to just how it's being the issues being examined.

I'll have to remember to share some of that information with the Susan.

**SH** **Susan Howard** 53:58

No, definitely.

**BC** **Bob Cullen** 53:59

So, yeah.

Well, I think we're all using the transportation method for we're all in the same boat though as far as just trying to get a better handle on it on behalf of you know our various constituencies and those who will serve so.

**SH** **Susan Howard** 54:15

Absolutely.

**BC** **Bob Cullen** 54:15

Thank you for addressing that.

You know, all good things must.

Unless somebody has a quick question or comment, it looks like all good things must come to an end.

We're just about ready to bump up against the end of the hour here, but I, Susan, I do wanna again.

Thank you.

And I do wanna let everybody know that that Susan very graciously accepted my invitation a few months ago to speak it.

It had been at least since 2017, since we've had any kind of TR like this talking.

What's going on in the federal let's put the federal legislative update?

Says Susan.

Even with the busy schedule and the full plate that she and her team have to deal with very willing to give a presentation.

So I'm going all happened.

I'm glad we had this TLR.

They so thank you for that, Susan.

**SH** **Susan Howard** 55:05

Thank you.

**BC** **Bob Cullen** 55:05

I do have to.

I do have to ask you this is what happens sometimes when I'm when I happen to be listening to.

I'm that was I wanna say eavesdropping on, but at least over here, in conversations in the hallway.

And I think I may have heard bits and pieces of something yesterday.

**SH** **Susan Howard** 55:18

Uh-huh.

**BC** **Bob Cullen** 55:21

My first day back in the office in a while.

If I understood correctly, did you actually guest star on that 1990s TV show saved by the bell?

**SH** **Susan Howard** 55:31

OK, you did overhear something about this, but it was not guest star.

**BC** **Bob Cullen** 55:34

OK, ohh OK.

**SH** **Susan Howard** 55:35

We were a couple of us were giving a hard time to one of our colleagues who did not know what saved by the bell was and I commented that I actually met the cast of saved by the bell when I was an audience member and a talk show when I was in high school, I was on a school trip and we got to do like a tour of like NBC Studios in there, like, hey, you've got 40 high school kids.

**BC** **Bob Cullen** 55:43

Ohh.

**SH** **Susan Howard** 55:55

Do you guys want to sit in the audience of this talk show, which is no longer on the air and the guests were the cast of saved by the bell?

So I did get to meet them.

Yeah.

So that's what we were.

That's so we're checking.

That is so embarrassing that that's what you heard.

**BC** **Bob Cullen** 56:08

That's what I like.

**SH** **Susan Howard** 56:09

I like the guest star better, but it wasn't quite that.

**BC** **Bob Cullen** 56:09

I just heard that.

OK.

So you're in the audio.

That's still good, though there must.

There must have been interesting.

Yeah, based on your C-SPAN appearance alone, though, I still hope to get your autograph one of these days.

**SH** **Susan Howard** 56:16

It was.

Yeah, yeah. Yes.

Alright.

**BC** **Bob Cullen** 56:23

OK.

**SH** **Susan Howard** 56:23

Thank you.

**BC** **Bob Cullen** 56:23

Well, thank you for clarifying that.

**SH** **Susan Howard** 56:24

Thanks everybody.

It was a pleasure to talk with you and again, if we can ever be of any help with then Ashes policy and government relations team, please let please let us know.

**BC** **Bob Cullen** 56:32

OK.

Thanks.

Thank you.

Again, Susan.

And I'm gonna, on behalf of David Gansz myself course.

Thank.

Thank Susan.

One more time here, but also to thank all of you for taking the time to be here with us today.

Really appreciate your flexibility and your willingness to join us.

For what I think was a very worthwhile.

Some a presentation with plenty of takeaways so appreciate.

Appreciate that before I I'm gonna really wrap it up quickly here before it make mention of a couple of upcoming TLR umm announcements here I do believe we hit my have at least one new member of the community who's here with us today for the first time.

Amanda Carter from Oregon DOT of who has taken over for Laura Wilt.

There, Amanda, I do want to.

Officially, I guess on behalf of the TLR attendees welcome you and we hope, hope that you're enjoying your new role so far and hopefully you'll be able to join us for future TLR's too.

So I'm just wanted to give you an official TLR welcome there.

**CJ** **CARTER Amanda J** 57:41

Well, thank you.

**BC** **Bob Cullen** 57:42

OK, great to have you.

So anyway, though we're very quickly though, next the next TLR is actually gonna be in two weeks from today, August 8th.

Thursday, August 8th are scheduled speakers.

Jesse Ann Long, who is the data curation librarian at NTL, so please keep on the lookout for further information on that TLR, you won't want to miss it.

So I think that will be it in terms of announcements, keep on the lookout for emails pertaining to today's presentation and also the others coming down the road.

In the meantime, I hope that everyone has a great rest of the day.

Great rest of the week.

Thank you very much.

Take care.

**WC** **Williams, Lamara C** 58:27

Thanks Bob.

● **Gansz, David (OST)** stopped transcription