

Newspapers call for transportation funding fix

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By [Keith Laing](#) - 07/07/14 10:38 AM EDT

Newspaper editorial boards across the nation are pushing for Congress to resolve a standoff over transportation funding that has threatened federal road payments to state and local governments.

The Department of Transportation has said that its Highway Trust Fund will **run out of money** next month unless Congress acts to prevent it.

Lawmakers are struggling with a way to close a shortfall that has been estimated to be about \$16 billion per year before a projected bankruptcy in the transportation trust fund.

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As the deadline looms, the DOT has warned states it will have to begin cutting back on infrastructure payments as early as Aug. 1, unless it gets an infusion of new money.

Newspapers from Washington, D.C., to Seattle are using their editorial pages to urge Congress to end the gridlock on transportation funding.

“There’s no reason for lawmakers to put the country through this uncertainty,” *The Washington Post* wrote in a July 3 **editorial**.

“It’s clear the money is needed,” the paper continued. “It’s clear that funding should be long-term and raised from a sustainable source of revenue, allowing for ample planning and enabling big transportation

projects. And it's clear that those who use the roads should pay for them, a policy that's fair and efficient. All Congress needs to do is accept the obvious and approve one of the many plans that fit these criteria.”

The Seattle Times agreed in an [editorial](#) of its own.

“States are counting on that money,” the *Times* wrote. “Congress must quickly supplement the fund with \$10 billion. Otherwise, it would trigger a slowdown in transportation spending nationally. That's bad news for motorists, construction workers and the national economy.”

The Spokane, Wash., *Spokesman-Review* said lawmakers should increase the federal gas tax for the first time since 1993 to solve the transportation funding crunch.

“The math is simple,” the paper [wrote](#). “While the feds spend \$53 billion a year on transportation projects, the 18.4 cents per gallon levy on gasoline (24.4 cents for diesel) raises only \$35 billion annually. Since 2008, Congress has made up the difference by moving money from general revenue accounts, which keeps projects funded but expands the already large budget deficit.

“Nobody likes to pay more at the pump,” the Spokane paper continued. “But when truckers start lobbying for tax increases, it's a clear sign the need is critical. The American Trucking Associations has joined the Chamber of Commerce and other business groups to push for a tax increase, because it's getting more difficult to get goods to markets. The average motorist is forking over half of what he or she paid per mile for roads since the latest federal gas tax increase, according to the American Automobile Association.”

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