

July 23, 2014

The Honorable William Shuster
Chairman, Transportation and Infrastructure
Committee
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Nick J. Rahall, II
Ranking Member, Transportation and
Infrastructure Committee
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Barbara Boxer
Chair, Committee on Environment and
Public Works
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable David Vitter
Ranking Member, Committee on
Environment and Public Works
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jay Rockefeller
Chair, Committee on Commerce, Science
and Transportation
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable John Thune
Ranking Member, Committee on
Commerce, Science and Transportation
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chair Boxer, Chair Shuster, Chair Rockefeller, Ranking Member Vitter, Ranking Member Rahall and Ranking Member Thune,

As you consider authorization bills for surface transportation, the undersigned groups encourage you to boost funding for the Bureau of Transportation Statistics (BTS) to the level requested under the President's FY15 Budget of \$29 million with inflationary increases for the out-years. The BTS budget has been stagnant for the past ten years. Indeed, its FY14 budget is the same as the FY05 budget, \$26 million, thereby eroding BTS of 20 percent of its purchasing power. (See attached graph.)

Increased BTS funding will deliver high returns by informing transportation policy in ways that can make transportation spending and service delivery more cost-effective, and boost private sector performance and economic growth.

Transportation is integral to our economy and country, from households to businesses to government. It makes up 16 percent of consumer spending. Large corporations and small businesses alike rely on our nation's transportation infrastructure for its personnel, clients and customers and the delivery and distribution of products and supplies. Similarly, state, local and federal governments rely on the transportation infrastructure for safety, economic development, delivery of services, and workforce access.

Given the importance of transportation to our economy and our country, understanding our transportation infrastructure is imperative. The BTS is the principal source of timely, accurate and objective information on the current state, safety, and performance of highway, rail, air, maritime, and pipeline transportation systems. Local, state and national policymakers, businesses, the agricultural sector, regulators, and other transportation users rely upon BTS data for planning, investment, business location, and other important decisions. BTS data are also critical in price determination for any manufactured, agricultural, or food good that is routinely transported over large distances and by different modes. As the value of goods per pound increases, and the value of time for both people and goods grow, we will need an even more responsive transportation system to be effective competitors at home and abroad.

The recent National Research Council (NRC) study on transportation data requirements, Special Report 304, states:

Transportation decision makers face a complex, changing, and uncertain environment, yet the essential data for supporting transportation operations, policy, and investment decisions at all governmental levels and in the private sector are fragmented and incomplete in coverage and detail, lack timeliness, and are poorly integrated for analysis of current and emerging issues.

The FY15 request for the BTS supports the Travel Data Initiative, which collects long distance intercity passenger travel data by reestablishing the Omnibus Household Survey, the Vehicle Inventory and Use Survey, and developing strategies for measuring long-distance travel from a variety of other sources including other surveys, administrative records, and emerging data sources. Funding the FY15 request would provide data to inform safety risk exposure, infrastructure performance, emissions, and economic performance.

We understand the difficult fiscal environment but urge you to consider the immense potential returns on this modest funding boost for the BTS.

Please direct any questions on this letter to Steve Pierson, Director of Science Policy for the American Statistical Association: pierson@amstat.org; 703.302.1841.

Thank you for your consideration.

AAA
Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety
American Association for Public Opinion
Research
American Highway Users Alliance
American Statistical Association
American Trucking Associations
Association of Academic Survey Research
Organizations
Association of Public Data Users
Consortium of Social Science Associations

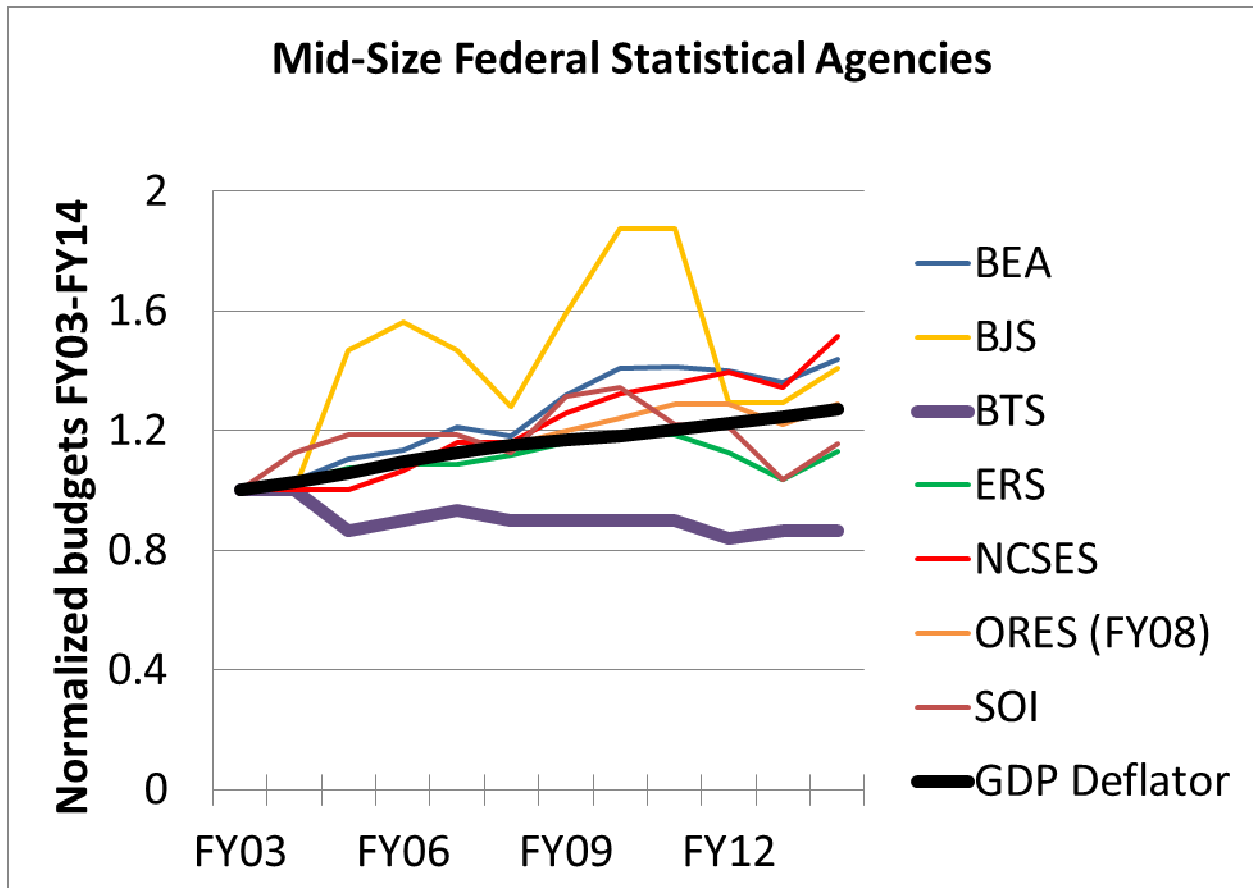
Council of Professional Associations on
Federal Statistics
Institute for Transportation and
Development Policy (ITDP)
Intelligent Transportation Society of
America
International Air Rail Organisation
National Association for Business
Economics
National Association of Railroad
Passengers

Natural Resources Defense Council
Surface Transportation Policy Partnership

U.S. Chamber of Commerce

Cc: Members, House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee,
Members, Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works
Members, Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation
Members, Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies
Appropriation Subcommittee

Enclosure: Chart of FY03-FY14 budgets for mid-size statistical agencies



The budgets of the seven mid-sized statistical agencies normalized to their FY03 levels, along with the GDP deflator to account for inflation. The Social Security Administration Office of Research, Evaluation, and Statistics' budget is normalized (and adjusted for inflation) to its FY08 level, when the current accounting scheme was implemented. SOI's FY13 dip is due partially to a budget adjustment. (Figure 1 adapted from <http://magazine.amstat.org/blog/2014/03/01/science-policy-03-2014/>.)

Agency Abbreviations:

BEA: Bureau of Economic Analysis

BJS: Bureau of Justice Statistics

ERS: Economic Research Service

NCSES: National Center for Science and Engineering Statistics, National Science Foundation

ORES: Office of Research, Evaluation, and Statistics, Social Security Administration

SOI: Statistics of Income Division, IRS