



October 7, 2015

The Honorable Orrin G. Hatch
Chairman
Committee on Finance
United States Senate
219 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Paul Ryan
Chairman
Ways and Means Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
1102 Longworth House Office Building
Washington D.C. 20515

The Honorable Ron Wyden
Ranking Member
Committee on Finance
United States Senate
219 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Sander Levin
Ranking Member
Ways and Means Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
1102 Longworth House Office Building
Washington D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Hatch and Ryan, Ranking Member Wyden and Levin:

We, the undersigned associations, represent the travel, tourism, airport, and airline industries, as well as the traveling public, throughout the United States. We strongly support a long-term agreement to fund much needed infrastructure investment across the country. However, we strongly oppose any suggestion that highway funding be generated via an increase in the aviation passenger's Customs and Border Protection (CBP) fees.

We have worked closely with CBP over the past three years to reduce the primary unacceptable Customs processing wait times at our nation's airports that serve to discourage inbound travel and tourism to the United States. This has included a significant investment in technologies like automated and mobile passport control and Global Entry kiosks that have significantly improved the passenger experience entering the country. We also supported CBP's hiring of new CBP officers to improve security and facilitate increased passenger growth. If provisions to increase and divert CBP fees to pay for highway investments are enacted, this progress in encouraging trade and travel, as well as the jobs created by these activities, will be jeopardized.

The Administrative Conference of the United States has developed detailed recommendations for Congress to consider when imposing user fees. The number one recommendation of the Conference is that "[a] government service for which a user fee is charged should directly benefit fee payers." Absent this payer benefit a user fee is nothing more than a tax increase. In this case, airline passengers should not be used as a piggy bank to pay for highway investments that benefit highway users. Additionally, using Transportation Security Administration (TSA) security fees to offset the deficit in the Bipartisan Budget Act was a misguided policy choice that redirected important security funds away from their intended and needed use. To charge travelers more without an increase in service or benefit cannot and should not become a common practice for policy makers.

Again, we share your goal of reaching a compromise to provide healthy highway funding, but we urge you to ensure that basic principles of fairness are upheld. We appreciate the funding challenges that face our nation, but the burden to fund all aspects of the federal government should not fall on the shoulders of aviation passengers.

Sincerely,

Airports Council International – North America
Airlines for America
Global Business Travel Association
International Air Transport Association
Travelers United
U.S. Travel Association