

Why Not? I Dare YOU!

By Andrew Cibor, P.E., PTOE

As part of the inaugural class of *LeadershipITE*, five classmates and I worked with the Advocacy Committee to identify ways to further ITE's role regarding transportation advocacy. The committee has since followed-up on actions based on some of our recommendations.

My experience on the team led to me to challenge myself to do something to further my own advocacy efforts. To learn how to be an effective transportation advocate, I thought it would be beneficial to ask individuals that ITE provides input to for their insight. I thought they may have input on how we as ITE members should approach them. So, I began my journey to put together a short email introducing myself and ITE, along with the following three questions:

1. What are the transportation issues you are most concerned about?
2. Where do you get information about transportation issues?
3. Is there a need or opportunity for an organization like ITE to be a resource to you?

I sent my email to two of my Idaho congressional representatives who are on transportation subcommittees, Senator Mike Crapo and Congressman Mike Simpson, as well as Congressman Don Young of Alaska. I contacted Congressman Young because he is a former chair of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, the author of a previous highway bill, Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU), and I know his legislative director. The responses I received from the offices of these three representatives are very encouraging.

Important Issues

Transportation funding is the primary transportation issue everyone is concerned about. Nobody talked about falling bridges, and I heard their perspective that a gas tax increase would be extremely challenging to pass. Congress is carefully watching research regarding mileage-based user fees, and trucking and shipping are very important to their respective states.

Information Sources

It turns out that it might have been better to ask where these representatives *don't* get information and input on transportation issues. The number and variety of information sources surprised me. I learned that only one of these individuals was aware of ITE before my

contact. It's a small sample size, but it suggests we have some work to do.

ITE's Opportunity

Everyone I contacted basically said, "Yes, there are ways ITE can [be a resource] to me." This is the exciting news! One of their primary suggestions includes educating the public. Prior U.S. Presidents championed user fees in the past; we need to remind the public that some form of user fees (not taxes) is necessary to support our transportation infrastructure. I was also informed they would greatly appreciate it if ITE worked with elected officials and their staff to identify how we can work smarter with the funds we do have.

My Dare to You

If you have not already, take a few minutes to contact your local, state, and national representatives. Let them know your background and ask a few questions. Start a dialogue and develop a relationship. If I can do it, you can too! Follow U.S. Transportation Secretary Anthony Foxx's request for voters to make more "noise" and engage with your elected leaders about the importance of long-term sustainable transportation funding. Be on the lookout for advocacy materials to be produced by the ITE Advocacy Committee and share those with your contacts. Finally, join the Advocacy Network on the ITE Community website and share your experiences with everyone else. [itej](#)

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Join the Advocacy Network

1. Visit the ITE Community at community.ite.org
2. Login to your account
3. Hover your cursor over "My Profile"
4. Select "My Settings"
5. Look for and select "Advocacy Network"
6. Select your subscription type: **Real-time** or **Daily Digest**

Questions about signing up? Contact Information Technology Services Senior Director Zach Pleasant at zpleasant@ite.org.