



October 28, 2010

Robert L. Darbelnet
President and CEO, AAA
1000 AAA Drive
Heathrow, FL 32746

Dear Mr. Darbelnet,

I appreciate your prompt response to my letter of September 1, as well as the follow-up letter that you asked AAA Mid-Atlantic to send. While these letters and the general transportation policy principles posted on your website make clear that we share an interest in multi-modal transportation and increased safety for bicyclists and pedestrians, I remain convinced that the position AAA Mid-Atlantic has adopted regarding acceptable uses of federal gas tax revenues does not square with the principles AAA espouses.

While AAA Mid-Atlantic made a definitive statement that AAA has not and will not call on Congress to de-fund walking and bicycling, this glosses over the fact that a position to restrict the Highway Trust Fund solely to highways would have the same result. Despite the misleading name, this transportation fund has supported transit for 40 years and bicycling and walking for nearly 20 years. Turning back the clock would seriously undermine the effort to achieve balanced multi-modal transportation. AAA must realize that a passing reference to the general fund is not a realistic response to the radical notion that we remove effective, popular programs from established transportation funding sources and implementation mechanisms, especially in an era of severe fiscal constraint. The crux of our policy disagreement is whether or not AAA will support continuation of established bicycling and walking programs—such as Transportation Enhancements and Safe Routes to School—through the Trust Fund. AAA still has not responded directly to this central question.

Tens of thousands of AAA members have signed our petition asking AAA to support our position on balanced transportation investment. Many of them have chosen to write to their local AAA chapters to raise their concerns directly. While AAA chapters have dutifully distributed national talking points, this puts them in the uncomfortable position of disappointing valued customers and discredits their local efforts to promote bicycle and pedestrian safety.

In my initial communications, I requested a meeting to seek a mutually beneficial resolution of our federal policy disagreement. I again respectfully request a face-to-face meeting. We wish to partner with AAA, not attack it. But we cannot sit idly by while AAA uses its considerable might to effectively undercut programs that are the lifeblood of the trails, bicycling and walking movements.

I look forward to hearing from you concerning a meeting at your earliest convenience.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Keith Laughlin".

Keith Laughlin, President
Rails-to-Trails Conservancy