

## TRANSPORTATION, COMMUNICATIONS, AND PUBLIC WORKS POLICY COMMITTEE June 2011

### Transportation Reauthorization

*This summary is based on information in the June 8, 2011, version of Transportation Weekly. The House and Senate Committees have not yet released the actual proposal.*

#### **Bill Summary:**

Key issues:

- Funding totals – The leadership of the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee (E&PW) seem to have agreed that the bill will be funded at the base-line (current law plus inflation), and the duration of the bill will be based on the available tax receipts for the Highway Trust Fund. The House has not released any information, but based on the decreased Appropriation levels, a significant cut is expected.
- Financing – This is still an unknown, but a gas tax increase seems to have been completely ruled out.
- Distribution Formulas – Typically the distribution formulas are finalized on the Floor, and are based solely on getting enough votes to pass.

Points that seem to be agreed to in the Senate:

- Funding levels of \$43 billion per year in contract authority and an obligation limitation of at least \$41.5 billion in 2012 (rising with inflation each year after).
- No earmarks.
- Consolidating many existing programs (see Attachment E)
- More focused freight program (consolidation)
- Major expansion of TIFIA funding from \$122 million per year (current law) to \$1 billion per year.
- Expedite project delivery without jeopardizing the environment or rights of the people to be heard.

Boxer has indicated that bike paths and walkways will be included, but Republican ranking members have not publicly agreed.

#### **Background:**

In the Senate, three spending committees and one tax committee will write the bill. Responsibilities are as follows:

- Environment and Public Works Committee: Federal Highway Administration
- Banking Committee: Transit
- Commerce Committee: Safety
- Finance Committee: How to pay for it

Before the bill goes to the floor, all three spending committees will have to consolidate their bills, and the Finance Committee will need to find a way to pay for it without causing a tax revolt by Republicans.

In the House, the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee will write the bill, followed by action by the Ways & Means Committee and the Rules Committee.

**Committee Recommendation:**

**Fiscal Impact:**

Unknown at this time.

**Existing League Policy:**

The League supports enhanced autonomy for local transportation decision-making and pursues transportation policy changes that move more dollars and decisions to local policy leaders. The League supports spending transportation moneys for transportation purposes. The League will seek the maximum share of available funding for local transportation programs. The League supports implementation of federal transportation funding re-authorization legislation in a manner that supports these principles.

**Comments:**

*Is this going to happen this year?* The answer to this question is anyone's guess.

How quickly this bill moves in the Senate seems to depend on two things: bi-partisan agreement and the appropriations process. Majority Leader Harry Reid has been very willing to move bi-partisan legislation quickly, and very unwilling to move any controversial legislation to the floor. In the Senate, appropriations bills may be held until after the Biden debt ceiling talks are complete, allowing the Transportation Reauthorization to come to the floor at an earlier date.

In the House, Republicans are pushing to complete the Appropriations process, and therefore the likelihood of the transportation reauthorization debate being delayed is greater. Of course, the House Transportation and Infrastructure has not released its proposal either.