



**REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION**

*Metropolitan Planning • Public Transportation & Operations • Engineering & Construction*

Metropolitan Planning Organization of Washoe County, Nevada

April 19, 2019

**AGENDA ITEM 4.2**

**TO:** Regional Transportation Commission

**FROM:** Lee G. Gibson, AICP  
Executive Director

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lee G. Gibson", is written over the printed name and title of the sender.

**SUBJECT:** Federal Report

Monthly update/messages from RTC Executive Director Lee G. Gibson – *no action will be taken on this item.*

Attachment

**Federal Update for RTC of Washoe County**  
**Prepared by Cardinal Infrastructure and Thompson Coburn**  
**April 19, 2019 Board Meeting**

**Virginia Street Project Update**

The U.S. Department of Transportation's (US DOT) Federal Transit Administration (FTA) announced the allocation of \$40.4 million in Fiscal Year (FY) 2018 funding for the Virginia Street BRT Extension Project. FTA announced a total of \$1.36 billion in federal funding allocations to 16 new and existing transit projects in the Capital Investment Grants (CIG) Program. With this announcement, FTA has advanced funding for 22 new CIG projects throughout the nation under this administration since January 20, 2017, totaling approximately \$5.06 billion in funding commitments.

RTC anticipates receiving the \$40.4 million grant for the project in late July, according to the FTA's roadmap. The allocation of the requested funding by FTA is a significant milestone in that process and is a precondition to obtaining the grant.

**Automated Driving System Demonstration**

RTC, in cooperation with Proterra, University of Nevada – Reno, the City of Reno, and EasyMile, submitted a grant application to the U.S. Department of Transportation's (US DOT) Fiscal Year 2018 Automated Driving System Demonstration Grant program. US DOT received 73 applications for up to \$60 million in federal funding.

This project will be the first living lab that maps complete traffic trajectories with roadside light detection and ranging (LiDAR) sensors and serves multimodal connected road users, including an autonomous, 40-foot electrically powered Proterra bus and two autonomous sedans. As such, this project will explore how roadside LiDAR data can be used in connected-traffic applications for connected and autonomous vehicles, pedestrians, and cyclists, which will be a novel contribution. The findings of this project could also help inform better infrastructure investment decisions.

**Transportation and Infrastructure Member's Day**

The House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee will hold a Member's Day on May. Members may testify on any issue that comes under committee jurisdiction, although Chairman DeFazio and Ranking Member Graves will prefer issues directed at the Subcommittee on Highways and Transit for purposes of surface transportation reauthorization. Due to the lack of earmarks, members can only discuss specific projects so much as they relate to a specific program or policy priority.

Furthermore, the committee will be sending out requests for stakeholders to submit priorities. RTC will be submitting comments to the committee and working with Congressman Amodei to provide policy and project priorities.

**Senate Hearing on 2020 Budget**

The Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing and Urban Development held a hearing on the President's FY 20 budget request for US DOT; Secretary Chao testified.

Subcommittee Chairwoman Susan Collins (R-MN) noted that US DOT has not offered any path forward for addressing looming shortfalls in the Highway Trust Fund (HTF) that start next year. Senator Collins commented on the approval of a FY 20 congressional budget agreement, "If we do not reach an agreement on the discretionary caps...the total funding available for non-defense discretionary programs will fall by \$55 billion. The impact of sequestration level funding would be devastating for our nation's infrastructure."

Subcommittee Ranking Member Jack Reed (D-RI), remarked that the recommended funding levels for CIG program are still "woefully inadequate." On the surface transportation reauthorization bill, Senator Reed said that small adjustments for inflation are a non-starter if that's what's proposed.

Senator Feinstein (D-CA) questioned Secretary Chao on the LA Metro and BART projects in the CIG program. Chao said that there is still thinking that "we are holding back [projects], we are not holding back." She further said that "we have advanced 15 projects into CIG project development...we have fully funded all existing contracts and are going ahead with them...many times when these projects don't go forward it's because they are not meeting the criteria."

Senator Durbin (D-IL) asked Secretary Chao about the HTF and the demands for infrastructure investment. Chao remarked that it does not make sense to have two legislative vehicles, both an infrastructure bill and a reauthorization; stating, "it may very well be, it's easier for everyone, to have one vehicle and that perhaps should be the surface reauthorization bill." Durbin also asked about the use of congressionally directed spending (earmarks) for an infrastructure bill, noting that President Trump has previously endorsed the idea. Chao responded, "If the president has said that, I agree with the president."

### **Senate Budget Resolution**

Senate Budget Committee Chairman Michael Enzi (R-WY) introduced a draft Fiscal Year 2020 budget resolution that sets out spending and revenue targets for the next five fiscal years. The blueprint provides instructions to authorizing committees to reduce deficits by a combined \$94 billion over five years by making changes to programs within their jurisdiction. Over half of that, \$50 billion, is within the purview of the Senate Finance Committee.

Notably, the budget assumes a highway user tax increase to keep the Highway Trust Fund solvent. The budget overview document provides: "The resolution calls for \$176 billion in increased revenue over the next five years. The resolution assumes about half of these receipts could be received as part of an effort to make the Highway Trust Fund solvent, though policy decisions would be left up to the Finance Committee. This assumption is based on an overarching user-pay principle to prevent the need for additional general fund transfers into the Fund."

### **House Budget Resolution**

The House adopted a rule "deeming" a \$1.295 trillion overall cap for the Appropriations Committee to start writing FY 20 spending bills. The rule also sets parameters for floor debate on legislation for FY 20 topline numbers (divided into separate defense and nondefense categories). House Budget Committee Chairman John Yarmuth (D-KY) said the House Democrats are considering a \$34 billion increase for non-defense spending. The non-defense spending limit would therefore be \$639 billion, a 5.6% increase.

While the rule allows FY 20 appropriations bills to move forward in the House, statutory spending caps imposed in 2011 need to be raised through legislation. If there's no deal by the end of the first session of the 116th Congress in December, across-the-board cuts known as sequestration, would trigger to enforce the 2011 law's caps for FY 20, which are 11% and 9% lower than this fiscal year's spending for defense and nondefense programs. At the moment, the President is opposed to raising the caps; however, the Administration's FY 20 budget request to Congress would supplement defense spending levels with \$174 billion in funding.

Transit benefited greatly from the FY 18 and FY 19 budget deal, which included \$10 billion per year of the \$65 billion per year non-defense cap increase to be dedicated to infrastructure programs. This is how the BUILD, Bus and Bus Facilities, and Low-No Emission programs received such significant increases above authorized levels.

### **US DOT Personnel**

The Senate confirmed Nicole Nason to be Administrator of the FHWA, 95-1, with Senator Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.) as the lone no vote. Nason currently serves as an assistant secretary for administration at the State Department and previously served as both NHTSA administrator and as an assistant secretary at USDOT. She also worked at Customs and Border Protection and for several congressional committees.

Dan DeBono is now serving as Chief Infrastructure Funding Officer at US DOT. DeBono will be responsible for some of the duties of Deputy Assistant Secretary for Transportation Policy Grover Burtthey, who left several months ago. DeBono will be taking over the financing and grants side of the portfolio, including INFRA and BUILD grants.

Ray Tellis was appointed FTA's Region IX Administrator. Ray has over 25 years of experience in the public transportation industry and previously served as the Director of FTA's Los Angeles Metropolitan Office, where he led the FTA team starting in 2006. In that capacity, he oversaw the delivery of near \$250 million in annual FTA program funds to over 25 public transit agencies.