



REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

Metropolitan Planning • Public Transportation & Operations • Engineering & Construction

Metropolitan Planning Organization of Washoe County, Nevada

MEETING DATE: July 16, 2021

AGENDA ITEM 7.2

From: Bill Thomas, Executive Director

Monthly update/messages from RTC Executive Director Bill Thomas on federal matters related to the RTC – *no action will be taken on this item.*

ATTACHMENT

- A. Written report prepared by Cardinal Infrastructure and Thompson Coburn

Federal Update for the Regional Transportation Commission of Washoe County
Prepared by Cardinal Infrastructure and Thompson Coburn
July 16, 2021 Board Meeting
Prepared July 12, 2021

Surface Transportation Reauthorization

On July 1, 2021, the House passed the INVEST in America Act by a vote of 221-201. This five-year reauthorization bill provides \$547 billion for surface transportation, as well as \$168.25 billion for drinking water and wastewater infrastructure. The transportation portion of the bill increased by 11% over last year's proposal to meet the investment goals of the President's American Jobs Plan.

It is unlikely the Senate Banking Committee (with jurisdiction over the transit title) will meet the ambitious proposal laid out by Chairman DeFazio (D-OR), and a concrete strategy has yet to unfold on passing the respective bills, reconciling the differences, and getting it to the President's desk for signature.

Amended and new provisions in the bill include, but are not limited to:

- Amends the Commercial Driver's License provision to only apply to vehicles "designed or used as a stretch limousine" (eliminating its applicability to smaller transit vehicles).
- Expands the Innovation Workforce Standards provision to include mobility on demand services in addition to automated vehicle transit.
- Requires regulations be established to "repurpose, recycle, reuse, sell, or lease transit vehicle batteries that are beyond the useful service life of such batteries for the purpose of transit vehicle propulsion and component parts of such batteries."
- Establishes a \$1 billion All Stations Accessibility Program "to assist eligible entities in financing capital projects to upgrade accessibility for persons with disabilities..."
- Establishes the Reconnecting Neighborhoods Program, "to identify, remove, replace, retrofit, or remediate the effects from eligible facilities and restore or improve connectivity, mobility, and access in disadvantaged and underserved communities..."
- Establishes the Reduce Transit Deserts Program "to establish or enhance bus service with headways equal to or shorter than 20 minutes for at least 18 hours per day in neighborhoods lacking such service; or to establish or increase express lane transit service that connects communities to jobs and essential destinations..."
- Establishes set-asides for "low income communit[ies]" and "priority area[s]" under the Zero Emission Bus Grants Program.
- Requires that not less than 12.5 percent of funds under the Zero Emission Bus Grants Program be available for workforce development training.
- Applies apprenticeship utilization requirements on select grant programs.

House Appropriations

On July 11th, the House Appropriations Committee released its FY 2022 Transportation-HUD appropriations bill. The Transportation-HUD Subcommittee will markup the bill on July 12th, with the full-committee markup on July 16th. The bill provides \$84.1 billion in funding, with an additional \$1.9 billion for U.S. DOT over FY 2021 levels, and \$1.4 billion above the Administration's budget request to Congress.

Funding for the Federal Transit Administration includes but is not limited to:

- \$1.2 billion - RAISE grants (formerly BUILD/TIGER)
- \$2.47 billion - Capital Investment Grant program
- \$464 million - Formula Bus and Bus Facilities (no increase from authorized levels)
- \$492 million - Discretionary Bus and Bus Facilities
- \$295 million - Low or No Emission Vehicle grants
- \$5 million - Zero-emission fleet transition planning grants
- \$25 million - Innovative mobility solutions demonstration and deployments
- \$50 million - Integrated smart mobility grants for planning and capital projects
- \$30 million - Climate resilience and adaptation grants

Funding for the Federal Highway Administration includes but is not limited to:

- \$12.1 billion - Surface Transportation Block Grant program (no plus up from authorized levels)
- \$2.5 billion - Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement program (no increase from authorized levels)
- \$1 billion - Infrastructure for Rebuilding America grant program (no increase from authorized levels)
- \$15 million - Grants to develop and expand the capacity to use and deploy Advanced Digital Construction Management Systems
- \$12 million - Regional infrastructure accelerator demonstration program
- \$145 million - Nationally significant federal lands and tribal projects program

Senate Bipartisan Infrastructure Proposal

A bipartisan group of Senators released an infrastructure framework that has since been endorsed by the President. The framework provides:

- \$49 billion – public transit
- \$7.5 billion – electric buses and transit
- \$109 billion – roads, bridges, major projects
- \$11 billion – safety
- \$66 billion – passenger and freight rail
- \$7.5 billion – electric vehicle infrastructure
- \$1 billion – reconnecting communities
- \$25 billion – airports
- \$16 billion – ports and waterways
- \$20 billion – infrastructure financing
- \$55 billion – water infrastructure
- \$65 billion – broadband
- \$21 billion – environmental remediation
- \$73 billion – power infrastructure
- \$47 billion – resilience
- \$5 billion – western water storage

The proposed financing sources for this \$579 billion in new investment, above base-line funding levels, includes:

- Reduce the IRS tax gap
- Unemployment insurance program integrity
- Redirect unused unemployment insurance relief funds
- Repurpose unused relief funds from 2020 emergency relief legislation
- State and local investment in broadband infrastructure
- Allow states to sell or purchase unused toll credits for infrastructure
- Extend expiring customs user fees
- Reinstate Superfund fees for chemicals
- 5G spectrum auction proceeds
- Extend mandatory sequester
- Strategic petroleum reserve sale
- Public-private partnerships, private activity bonds, direct pay bonds and asset recycling for infrastructure investment
- Macroeconomic impact of infrastructure investment

Infrastructure Package and Reconciliation

While the surface transportation reauthorization bills are making their way through Congress, there are additional efforts to advance a comprehensive infrastructure bill and a budget reconciliation bill. Senate Majority Leader Schumer said the Senate plans to combine the Senate's surface transportation bill with the infrastructure provisions agreed to by the bipartisan group of Senators.

Separate and apart from the infrastructure package, Democrats are pursuing a budget reconciliation bill. According to reports, Democrats will not use reconciliation to pass additional physical infrastructure funding not secured in the bipartisan framework. Instead, the reconciliation package may include, but is not limited to, climate change (clean energy tax credits, etc.), healthcare, universal childcare, education, paid leave, child tax credit, addressing essential workers who are immigrants, and housing.

The timing on what and when moves remains uncertain. Though the reconciliation bill is likely to originate in the Senate, the question remains on whether or how Democrats will tie the infrastructure package vote to the reconciliation bill. Many progressive Democrats have indicated they are not going to support the bipartisan infrastructure deal unless they can secure assurances that there will be a separate bill with other Democratic priorities.

FTA Personnel

Paul Kincaid will serve as the Federal Transit Administration's (FTA's) Associate Administrator for Communications and Congressional Affairs. Paul served on the Biden-Harris U.S. DOT transition team and had been Director of Congressional Outreach for the Association of Former Members Congress. Prior to that role, he was a freelance consultant for several years following his eight-month service as Associate Administrator at FTA under the Obama Administration.

Paul has significant Hill experience, working as press secretary and communications director for Congressman Mike Honda (D-CA), Congressman Antonio Cardenas (D-CA), and Congressman Russ Carnahan (D-MO), as well as communications director for Senator Bill Nelson's campaign.