



REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

Metropolitan Planning • Public Transportation & Operations • Engineering & Construction

Metropolitan Planning Organization of Washoe County, Nevada

MEETING DATE: October 15, 2021

AGENDA ITEM 6.2

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
October 15, 2021 Board Meeting
Prepared October 7, 2021

Bipartisan Infrastructure Bill

On October 1st, in a vote of 365-51, the House passed a 30-day extension of the surface transportation authorization, the FAST Act. This was necessary due to the House not passing the Senate-passed bipartisan infrastructure bill, the (Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA)) before the expiration of the one-year FAST Act extension. The IIJA includes a five-year reauthorization of the FAST Act. Multiple surface transportation authorizations are not without precedent; TEA-21 was extended 13 times, SAFETEA extended 10 times, and MAP-21 extended 5 times.

Speaker Pelosi initially promised House Moderates that a vote on the IIJA would take place on September 27th, which became the start of debate. Ultimately, Speaker Pelosi and House Majority Leader Hoyer decided not to hold a vote on the bill. In response, Congressman Gottheimer (D-NJ), Co-Chair of the bipartisan Problem Solvers Caucus, released a statement criticizing Speaker Pelosi and the Progressive Caucus, saying, "...Speaker Pelosi breached her firm, public commitment...[and] a small far left faction of the House of Representatives undermined that agreement and blocked a critical vote on the President's historic bipartisan infrastructure bill."

Congresswoman Murphy (D-FL), Co-Chair of the Blue Dog Coalition and Chief Deputy Whip of the House Democratic Majority, released a statement saying, "The Speaker delayed the vote because some of my Democratic colleagues, in a misguided effort to gain 'leverage' over their fellow Democrats in the negotiations on the separate Build Back Better Act, have threatened to vote against a very good infrastructure bill."

The infrastructure bill provides \$1.2 trillion in spending over five years; of which, \$550 billion is new federal investments. The bill provides \$91.2 billion in funding for the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) over five years, of which \$40.4 billion is "above baseline" spending increases provided by the bill. The bill also authorizes an additional \$15.75 billion in supplemental appropriations from general revenues for FTA over the next five fiscal years.

Speaker Pelosi indicated her new deadline for passing the infrastructure deal is October 31st, when the 30-day FAST Act reauthorization is set to expire. Meanwhile, Democratic leadership and President Biden are working to address the intra-party divisions concerning the budget reconciliation package.

Budget Reconciliation

Negotiations on a budget reconciliation bill within the Democratic party are ongoing. It remains to be seen what form the final reconciliation package will take – both on overall price tag and policy provisions. While the initial reconciliation bill was drafted to increase spending by \$3.5 trillion, the Administration suggested they expect the size of any final package to be between \$1.9-2.3 trillion.

The House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee's budget reconciliation bill would increase spending by \$57.3 billion over 10 years. In its current form, the House bill provides, among other funding provisions, \$9.9 billion for the newly created Affordable Housing Access Program Competitive grants program, to be issued jointly by FTA and the Department of Housing and Urban Development to support access to affordable housing and the enhancement of mobility for residents in disadvantaged communities or neighborhoods, in persistent poverty communities, or for low-income riders generally.

Bus and Bus Facilities

FTA released a notice of funding opportunity for its FY 2021 Buses and Bus Facilities Program. The program provides \$409.59 million in funding for capital projects to replace, rehabilitate, purchase or lease buses and related equipment, and bus-related facilities. In addition to applying statutory review criteria, FTA will also give priority consideration to applications that encourage racial equity and address barriers to opportunity; create significant community benefits relating to the environment; and projects that support the Justice40 Initiative with the goal of delivering 40 percent of the overall benefits of relevant investments to disadvantaged communities. Applications are due by 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time on November 19, 2021.

Route Planning Restoration

FTA released its \$25 million FY 2021 notice of funding opportunity for the Route Planning Restoration Program. This program funding will be awarded to supports route planning designed to: 1) Increase ridership and reduce travel times, while maintaining or expanding the total level of vehicle revenue miles of service provided in the planning period; or 2) Make service adjustments to increase the quality or frequency of service provided to low-income riders and disadvantaged neighborhoods or communities. With a federal funding share of 100%, applicants must have experienced a reduction in transit service any time on or after January 20, 2020, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Proposals are due by 11:59 pm Eastern Time on November 15, 2021.

Transit Worker Safety

The FTA published a Request for Information (RFI) on Transit Worker Safety, requesting input on transit worker assault prevention. Based on security events reported to the National Transit Database, the RFI notes an increase in assaults on transit operators. According to the RFI, "FTA continues to explore options for potential FTA actions to address this concern." Comments are due by November 23rd, 2021.