
GIAMPO – Policy Board

Tuesday, July 22, 2014

Regular Session

Item J4

Federal Legislative Updates

Status of the Highway Trust Fund & Federal Transportation Bill

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AASHTO Journal

House Ways and Means Committee, Senate Finance Committee Pass Proposed HTF Fixes, MAP-21 Extensions

The House Ways and Means Committee and the Senate Finance Committee each acted yesterday on measures that would avert Highway Trust Fund insolvency in the coming weeks.

The House Committee on Ways and Means on Thursday morning passed by voice vote a package that funds transportation projects (through the Highway Trust Fund) until the end of May.

The measure, the Highway and Transportation Funding Act of 2014 (or H.R. 5021), would supply the HTF with about \$10.8 billion and extend federal highway, transit, and highway safety program authority through May 31, 2015. Committee Chair Dave Camp (R-MI) said that the measure would get that funding through "pension smoothing and customs user fees," which Camp said are policies he believes the Senate would support, and a transfer of gas-tax-funded monies in the Leaking Underground Storage Tank Trust Fund, which Camp again said should have support as this was used in the passage of MAP-21.

"This is the only package with a proven history of getting big bipartisan votes in both the House and Senate. And, while it doesn't provide as much funding as I would like—enough to get through the end of next year—it does give Congress and the tax-writing committees ample time to consider a more long-term solution to the Highway Trust Fund," said Camp in a statement. "I know these policies are not perfect, but they are viable, have been used by the House and Senate before and should pass both the House and Senate quickly. With these policies, we can steer clear of another crisis showdown, and we should."

House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee Chair Bill Shuster (R-PA) said he was happy to get the measure passed through committee, but he is also focused on finding a long-term fix.

"This bill in no way precludes Congress from continuing to work on addressing a long-term funding solution, and a long-term reauthorization bill remains a top priority for the Transportation Committee," Shuster said. "However, this legislation is the responsible solution at this time, ensures that we don't play politics with these programs, and provides for making continued improvements to our surface transportation system."

The measure is scheduled for a full House vote next week.

Additional information on H.R. 5021 is available [here](#).

Meanwhile, the Senate Finance Committee passed its own short-term HTF fix later in the day on Thursday by voice vote, with only Senator Tom Carper (D-DE), who is also a member of the Environment and Public Works Committee, dissenting. The Senate Finance measure also would provide \$10.8 billion

in new revenue to the HTF, composed of a slightly different mix of revenue sources. However, this proposal does yet not include a program authority extension beyond the current expiration date of September 30, 2014.

The Senate Finance Committee mark also included an amendment to rescind about \$45 million of funding associated with "orphan earmarks" from surface transportation authorization bills where more than 90 percent of the funds associated with the earmark remains unobligated after ten or more years. However, both the Secretary of Transportation and the state administering the project would have the ability to delay the rescission of a project if the case can be made that the project is still a priority.

July 11, 2014

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