

**GOVERNMENT RELATIONS, INC.**

**1050 17<sup>TH</sup> STREET**

**SUITE 510**

**WASHINGTON, DC 20036**

**(202) 775-0079**

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**May 2012 Monthly Report for MTC**

**To: Steve Heminger, Executive Director  
MTC**

**From: Tom Bulger, President  
GRI**

**Re: Monthly Report for May 2012**

**Date: May 30, 2012**

- **Surface Transportation Authorization Conference Committee Update**
- **U.S. Department of Transportation's (DOT) Views Regarding the Authorization Conference Committee**
- **California Metropolitan Planning Organizations' (MPOs) Transportation Authorization Priorities**
- **Annual Intelligent Transportation Society of America (ITSA) Meeting**
- **May Meetings**

### **Surface Transportation Authorization Conference Committee Update**

House and Senate committee staff has been meeting nearly twice a day in closed sessions regarding surface transportation authorization legislation. This process is a walkthrough of S. 1813 versus H.R. 4348.

Senator Barbara Boxer held a news conference and declared that 80 percent of the conference committee issues have been resolved. She later added that 80 percent of the Senate's bill, or her Committee's title (Highways), is non-controversial. It also was reported that some of the House Republican freshmen who are conferees have been walking into the staff meetings.

Senator Boxer has set a date of June 7 to wrap up conference committee talks, when the House and Senate are in session. This date is the earliest Congress can agree to a conference committee product in order to get a bill to the President by the June 30 deadline. An agreement for a conference report will most likely happen at the end of July. Note that Congress is in recess in August and the Republican and Democratic National Conventions will be held during the recess.

### **U.S. Department of Transportation's (DOT) Views Regarding the Authorization Conference Committee**

On May 16, DOT Secretary Ray LaHood issued a letter to the House and Senate highway bill conferees regarding the Administration's positions on authorization. Washington observers were surprised by this action, as the Obama Administration had not submitted a surface transportation authorization proposal to Congress.

The Administration's views were mostly supportive of the Senate's bill (S.1813); however, they did highlight some opposition. Specifically, the Administration opposes:

- some of the positive train control provisions;
- programmatic set asides in the highway safety improvement program;
- allowing Transportation Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (TIFIA) debt to be subordinated to existing debt;
- dedicating Intelligent Transportation System (ITS) at 50 percent for competitive infrastructure grants; and
- the restriction of bus formula funding to operators of existing fixed route service.

### **California Metropolitan Planning Organizations' (MPOs) Transportation Authorization Priorities**

On May 17, MTC, the San Diego Association Governments (SANDAG), the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) and the Sacramento Area Council of Governments

(SACOG) submitted a letter to Senator Boxer regarding California's priorities for transportation authorization. The four MPOs pointed out that they represent approximately 80 percent of the state's population.

The following five issue areas were highlighted:

1. strengthen California's metropolitan areas by keeping suballocation of federal highway funds;
2. shift Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) set-aside for construction equipment to the states;
3. approve a National Freight Program in the conference report;
4. accelerate project delivery; and
5. restore parity for transit and vanpools at the current tax-free limit for parking.

### **Annual Intelligent Transportation Society of America (ITSA) Meeting**

ITSA held its annual meeting in Maryland from May 21 through May 23. At the conference, the ITSA Board dropped their support for a Smart Cities Deployment discretionary grant program and instead agreed to support funding for the DOT's Connected Vehicle Initiative. During the conference we heard from majority and minority Senate Environment & Public Works Committee staff and from majority House Transportation & Infrastructure Committee staff.

### **May Meetings**

During May, transportation authorization meetings were conducted with Rep. Shelley Moore Capito, R-W.Va., and with the staff of:

- Rep. Richard Hanna, R-NY
- Rep. Peter King, R-NY
- Rep. Earl Blumenauer, D-Ore.
- Rep. Jaime Herrera Beutler, R-Wash.
- Rep. Pat Tiberi, R-Ohio
- Rep. Tim Bishop, D-NY

Additionally, we attended two ITSA Legislative Committee meetings.