

April 2015 Monthly Report for MTC

To: Steve Heminger, Executive Director
From: Tom Bulger, President, GRI
Re: Monthly Report for April 2015
Date: April 29, 2015

- **Bay Area Briefings with Majority & Minority Senior Staff of Senate Environment & Public Works (EPW), Senate Banking, Housing & Urban Affairs and Senate Commerce, Science & Transportation Committee**
- **Coalition for America's Gateways & Trade Corridors Washington, D.C. Meeting**
- **No Solution in Sight for Transportation Reauthorization Bill**
- **Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) Grants Pre-Application Deadline**
- **Senate Banking, Housing & Urban Affairs Committee Hearing on MAP-21 Reauthorization**
- **Bipartisan Gas Tax Legislation Proposed in the House**
- **Six Local Government Groups Urge Federal Highway Program Suballocation**
- **Meeting**

Bay Area Briefings with Majority & Minority Senior Staff of Senate Environment & Public Works (EPW), Senate Banking, Housing & Urban Affairs and Senate Commerce, Science & Transportation Committee

On April 8 - April 10, I was in the Bay Area with the Majority and Minority senior staff from the Senate's three main authorizing Committees. Eight Committee staff attended the Bay Area briefings and tours of important transportation projects. Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) staff Rebecca Long and Randy Rentschler produced an impressive agenda and impressive transportation logistics. Many of MTC's partners also participated in the briefings and tours.

Coalition for America's Gateways & Trade Corridors Washington, D.C. Meetings

On April 22 and 23, I attended the Coalition for America's Gateways & Trade Corridors annual meeting in Washington, D.C. representing MTC. The Coalition is urging Congress to include a well-funded freight section in the Surface Transportation Reauthorization bill. Speakers included the following:

Senator Tom Carper (D-Del.)
Rep. Alan Lowenthal (D-Calif.)
Rep. Richard L. Hanna (R-N.Y.)
Rep. Peter DeFazio (D-Ore.)
Rep. Earl Blumenauer (D-Ore.)
Victor Mendez, Deputy Secretary, United States Department of Transportation (USDOT)
Senate EPW Committee senior staff
Senate Commerce Committee senior staff
House Transportation & Infrastructure (T&I) Committee senior staff

In addition, I attended advocacy meetings with the following Coalition members:

Senator Bill Nelson (D-Fla.)
Rep. Brian Babin (R-Texas)

No Solution in Sight for Transportation Reauthorization Bill

Funding for the Federal Highway and Public Transit programs is on the brink of a major crisis. The current authorization deadline is May 31. As of this date, there is little hope that Congress is willing to find increased revenue for much more than another temporary extension to the program(s). Since 2008, Congress has transferred about \$65 billion into the Highway Trust Fund and has extended the highway and transit programs 33 times according to the USDOT.

The big question is how long this next extension will be; the end of July and the end of September have been floated. To keep the Highway Trust Fund at current funding levels will require another General Fund transfer.

Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) Grants Pre-Application Deadline

The next TIGER Grants Pre-Application deadline is May 4, 2015. USDOT has made \$500 Million available for the newest round of TIGER grants.

Senate Banking, Housing & Urban Affairs Committee Hearing on MAP-21 Reauthorization

The Senate Banking, Housing & Urban Affairs Committee held a hearing on April 23 to examine and discuss proposals for the MAP-21 Surface Transportation Act Reauthorization. Committee Chairman Richard Shelby (R-Ala.) said the bill needs to be balanced and contain certainty and stability. Ranking Member Sherrod Brown (D-Ohio) noted that transit ridership is outpacing population growth while funding remains flat.

Michael P. Melaniphy, American Public Transportation Association President and Chief Executive Officer, urged a six-year \$100 billion bill that would increase the transit account from \$10.7 billion to \$22 billion by 2021.

Bipartisan Gas Tax Legislation Proposed in the House

A bipartisan group of House Members has introduced the Bridge to Sustainable Infrastructure Act. The bill would increase the current gas tax of 18.4 cents per gallon set in 1993, and indexes it to inflation. The bill also creates a Bicameral Transportation Commission to study permanent funding solutions. Currently, the gas tax generates \$34 billion per year while the Trust Fund is spending \$50 billion, requiring a \$16 billion General Fund transfer. The bill also sets a deadline of December 31, 2016 by which Congress must either pass a new funding mechanism that fully funds the Trust Fund for at least three years, or implement the funding plan proposed by the Bicameral Transportation Commission. Should Congress fail to act, the bill sets in place automatic gas tax increases to cover the Trust Fund.

Six Local Government Groups Urge Federal Highway Program Suballocation

On April 20, six local government groups issued a letter to the Senate EPW Committee and to the House T&I Committee leadership requesting suballocation of the Federal Highway Surface Transportation Program, Transportation Alternatives Program and Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Program funding in the MAP-21 Reauthorization legislation. The local government organizations include the mayors, cities, counties, metropolitan planning organizations, regional council's and development district's.

Meeting

- Presentation of monthly report before the MTC Legislation Committee on April 10