



Legislation

November 6, 2009

Transportation Bill Extended through December 18th – Congress passed on Thursday, October 29th a continuing resolution to fund through December 18th the portions of the federal government that rely on the unfinished appropriations bills. It was included with the FY2010 Interior-Environment Appropriations bill, which President Obama signed on October 30th. The bill passed the House by a 247-178 vote, with the Senate approval margin being 72-28. Congress has now finished five of the twelve annual appropriation bills.

The continuing resolution also extended the authorization of the surface transportation plan – the “Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users” (SAFETEA-LU) to December 18th. Congress reauthorizes a surface transportation plan every six years. The current version was scheduled to expire on September 30th, 2009.

The debate over health-care reform has overshadowed all other action in Congress this fall except for the passage of annual appropriation bills. Progress on the Transportation Bill or Rail Reform legislation is not expected until the health-care debate ends.

Senator Durbin (D-IL) suggested this week that funding for surface transportation spending be frontloaded to help alleviate the current high unemployment numbers while Congress works to finish the six-year reauthorization bill that expired on September 30th. Beyond the lack of attention from Congress due to the health-care debate, funding for the \$500 billion reauthorization bill remains its largest stumbling block. The House Ways and Means Committee has yet to identify \$200 plus billion in new revenue sources needed for passage.

Surface Transportation Board

New Regulations Revise Filing Process – The STB is updating its regulations for Board filings effective November 16th. It eliminated the position of Secretary (was vacant), and future Board filing should be sent to the Chief, Section of Administration, Office of Proceedings, Surface Transportation Board. The complete text of the decision can be found on the STB website at: <http://www.stb.dot.gov/decisions/readingroom.nsf/WEBUNID/1159D1664F354B098525764800459F8B?OpenDocument>



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