

Legislative Issue Briefing

March 2010

SURFACE TRANSPORTATION AUTHORIZATION

The Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act – A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU), the multi-year authorizing law that last set federal investment levels and program structure for surface transportation programs, expired on September 30, 2009. Congress has not yet enacted a new authorization law, but rather passed a series of short term extensions of SAFETEA-LU to keep the federal surface transportation programs operational. The current extension funds the program through March 28, 2010, and legislation is pending in the U.S. Senate to further extend the program through December 31, 2010.

Congress' failure to enact a full six year authorization bill to replace SAFETEA-LU has severely damaged the ability of our nation's transit systems to engage in the long-term planning that is necessary for them to meet critical transportation needs in their communities. It is also detrimental to the hundreds of transit related businesses that rely on these investments to create and maintain jobs. While funding for transit infrastructure in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) has helped to bridge the gap, a new long-term bill is needed to ensure the continued growth of transit investment. It is absolutely critical that Congress enact a long-term authorization bill this year, to ensure that jobs created under ARRA are maintained and new jobs are created, transit assets are maintained in a "state-of-good repair" and transit systems can expand to meet projected ridership demands.

APTA has recommended that Congress immediately pass a six-year surface transportation authorization bill that provides no less than \$123 billion for public transportation and no less than \$50 billion for high speed passenger rail to improve transit assets and expand systems to meet ridership demands. APTA has recommended program changes to streamline project delivery and better distribute funds to meet diverse industry's needs. The U.S. House of Representatives' Transportation and Infrastructure Committee has introduced and advanced legislation, known as the Surface Transportation Authorization Act of 2009, to authorize surface transportation programs through 2015, and leaders in the U.S. Senate have committed to develop and advance legislation in that chamber this year.

APTA POSITION

- **Congress needs to pass a full, six year surface transportation bill that provides robust growth in the federal public transportation program to help transit systems meet their mobility needs and allow businesses to create and maintain jobs.**
- **The next surface transportation authorization bill should provide no less than \$123 billion for public transportation programs and \$50 billion for high speed passenger rail to help maintain transit assets in a state-of-good repair and expand our systems to meet growing ridership demand.**
- **Congress should adopt APTA's program structure and policy recommendations that improve the program, speed project delivery and distribute funds to better meet our industry's diverse needs.**