



## October 27, 2015

After weeks of inaction, this is going to be a very busy week in Congress. A number of critical bills will be considered on the House and Senate floor including:

**Debt Ceiling** – an agreement was reached last night to suspend the federal debt limit until March 15, 2017 – after the November 2016 presidential election.

**Budget Deal** – a deal was also reached last night on a two-year budget agreement – FY'16 and FY'17 - which will raise spending caps for both defense and non-defense programs by a total of \$80B (\$50B in FY'16 and \$30B in FY'17) split equally between the programs. This deal, if approved, should allow Congress to pass the pending full-year FY'16 federal agency appropriations bills. The government is currently under a temporary CR until December 11. The budget deal will be paid for by more "pension smoothing", curbing a pending 52 percent boost in Medicare Part B premiums for the highest and lowest income Medicare recipients, and by selling 58 million barrels of oil from the Strategic Petroleum Reserve (SPR) from 2018 to 2025. It is unclear if the SPR sell-off is the same "payfor" that the Senate previously used to fund its multi-year surface transportation bill, the DRIVE Act – which would be a significant problem. Here is a [link](#) to a summary of the budget deal. It is unclear at this point how much of the additional funding will be used to increase FY'16 funding levels for discretionary transportation programs such as Amtrak, TIGER, New Starts, etc.

The debt ceiling and budget deals will be combined into one bill that is expected to come to the House floor as early as Wednesday and then will be considered by the Senate, thereby avoiding a government default and shutdown.

**MAP-21 Highway and Transit Program Extension/PTC Extension** - HR 3819, another short-term MAP-21 extension to continue authorization and funding for federal highway and transit programs for three weeks – through November 20 - will be brought up on the House floor today under a suspension of the rules and is expected to pass. Senate leadership has indicated it will also expedite passage of the bill before October 29 when the current extension expires. There are sufficient funds in the Highway Trust Fund to pay for the new extension.

The bill includes an extension of the December 31, 2015 deadline for implementation of Positive Train Control (PTC) until December 2018. An identical PTC extension was also included in the House's six-year STRRA reauthorization bill, but that bill is not expected to pass in time to avoid affected railroads having to begin to shut down operations.

House leaders continue to devise a strategy to bring HR 3763, the House's six-year surface transportation reauthorization bill (STRRA), to the House floor in the next few weeks despite the fact that no new revenue has been identified to pay for the bill.



## Washington Update

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Export-Import Bank Authorization - the House plans to vote today on the renewal of the Export-Import Bank after taking the rare step of voting to discharge consideration of the bill without going through the committee approval process. The Senate passed the Ex-Im authorization as part of the Senate DRIVE Act in late July. The Ex-Im Bank authorization previously expired on June 30, 2015.

In addition, on Thursday the House will vote on the nomination of Rep. Paul Ryan (R-WI) to be Speaker of the House to replace retiring Rep. John Boehner (R-OH). Ryan is currently the chair of the House Ways & Means Committee.

US DOT TIGER Grants – US DOT is expected to formally announce the latest round of TIGER grant awards sometime this week.