

Parsons Brinckerhoff Washington Update - August 1, 2014 - Interim Update

Yesterday afternoon, the House debated the Senate amendments to the previously passed House bill, HR 5021, the short-term Highway Trust Fund patch and MAP-21 extension. The House voted 272 to 150 to strip out the two Senate amendments – the Wyden/Hatch amendment to substitute the Senate offsets for the General Fund transfer and the Boxer/Carper/Corker amendment to shorten the extension from May 31, 2015 to December 19, 2014 in an effort to keep pressure on Congress to work on a long-term fix, potentially in a post-election Lame Duck session. The fact that just before the House floor debate it was discovered that the Senate bill was short several billion dollars in offsets did not help the argument in support of the Senate bill. House leaders insisted that just because the bill does not expire until May 2015, that would not stop Congress from working on a longer-term bill in the interim, although precedent shows that is usually not the case.

HR 5021 was then sent back to the Senate, where at 9:00pm last night the Senate agreed to recede from its two amendments and voted 81 to 13 to agree to the House-passed bill. Congressional action is now complete and the bill goes to the President to sign – which he has indicated he will do. The House and Senate will adjourn today for their five-week summer recess, returning the week of September 8.

On a positive note, an immediate slowdown in HTF reimbursements was avoided and Congress showed that it will not let the highway and transit programs go bankrupt, but on a negative note, it is not clear when Congress will start to work on a more permanent solution to the HTF solvency issue and pass a multi-year highway and transit reauthorization.

Here is a [link](#) to the House floor vote – 227 Republicans and 45 Democrats voted “yes” and 2 Republicans and 148 Democrats voted “no”. The Democratic “no” votes were generally members who supported the Senate amendment to shorten the length of the extension and did not want it stripped from the bill – a position most of the transportation industry groups supported. Here is a [link](#) to last night’s Senate floor vote on final passage.