

PB Washington Update - Interim Report - December 20, 2010

As noted in the December 19 PB Update, the Senate's FY'11 Omnibus funding bill collapsed under its own weight. Instead, Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid has drafted a temporary Continuing Resolution (CR) through March 4, 2011 (as compared to the House-passed, year-long CR). The new, shorter CR will be voted on by the Senate early Tuesday morning. It will then be sent over to the House for consideration. The House does not have to agree to the shorter Senate CR, but given that Christmas is in five days and they are anxious to leave town, it is likely they will do so.

The Senate's March 4 CR appears to fund most transportation programs at their FY'10 funding levels. The bill does include an extension of the SAFETEA-LU authorization, but only through March 4 rather than through September 30 as the previous House and Senate bills had. It does not include an extension of the expiring FAA authorization because over the weekend the FAA programs were extended separately when the Senate agreed to House bill HR 6473, which the House had passed on December 2, extending FAA programs through March 31, 2011.

Unfortunately this outcome does not provide much stability or predictability for transportation and other infrastructure programs. It appears we will have a funding/appropriations bill at the lower FY'10 levels and only through March 4, a surface transportation program authorized only through March 4 and an FAA program authorized only through March 31. This means the new Republican House will have to finish up the FY'11 appropriations process early next year before they immediately have to start the FY'12 budget/appropriations process.