

PB Washington Update - March 22, 2012 - Interim Update

Despite earlier speculation that the House would introduce a short-term extension of the federal highway and transit programs lasting only through the end of May, in an effort to keep the pressure on to pass a multi-year bill, today House T&I Committee Chairman John Mica will introduce a three-month extension through June 30, 2012. It will be a "clean" bill meaning it will not include any policy or funding changes. Senate Democratic leaders are currently not supporting any extension bill in an effort to keep pressure on the House, however, it is highly unlikely the Senate would allow the programs to shut down on March 31 when the current extension expires.

If passed, this 90-day extension will be the 9th since SAFETEA-LU expired on September 30, 2009.

In the House, Rep. Tim Bishop (D-NY), a member of the T&I Committee, is gathering co-sponsors in advance of introducing a House bill, expected to be identified as HR 14, that would include the text of the two-year Senate-passed authorization bill. He currently has close to 100 cosponsors, all Democrats. If passed, this would resolve the procedural problem which prohibits the House from simply approving the Senate-passed bill since bills that deal with taxes or revenues must originate in the House. There is speculation that there may be enough votes in the House to pass HR 14 with some tweaks because, unlike HR 7 the House five-year authorization bill, it might be able to attract both Republican and Democratic votes to get to the critical number of 218 votes. Whether House leaders will allow HR 14 to come to the House floor is another question.

Yesterday, there was a short-lived attempt to attach the Senate-passed version of the reauthorization bill to an unrelated piece of legislation, but it was defeated on a procedural vote.