PB Washington Update – April 18, 2012 – Interim Update

This afternoon, the full House debated and passed HR 4348, a bill to extend current highway and transit programs by through September 30 that will be used as a "shell" bill to go to conference with the Senate's \$109B two-year surface transportation reauthorization bill, MAP-21. The bill also includes approval of the Keystone pipeline and the RESTORE Act related to restoration of the Gulf Coast. The bill passed 293-127.

During the floor debate, the House approved an amendment to include some of the environmental streamlining provisions from HR 7, the original House five-year reauthorization bill, so that the House will not have to go to conference with the Senate without some policy provisions to negotiate. Earlier in the week, it seemed likely that significantly more HR 7 policy provisions would be added to the new "shell" bill, such as program consolidation and performance measures, but that did not occur.

During the floor debate, House T&I Committee Chairman John Mica agreed to send a letter to Speaker Boehner asking him to immediately name House conferees and expedite the start of a conference with the Senate to develop a final bill. The Democratic leaders of the T&I Committee agreed to sign the letter. Conference could start as early as next week.

Yesterday, OMB issued a Statement of Administration Policy (SAP) on the new House bill. Here is a <u>link</u>. The Administration strongly opposes HR 4348 and is threatening to veto the bill over the Keystone pipeline provision because it "circumvents a longstanding and proven process for determining whether cross-border pipelines are in the national interest by mandating the permitting of the Keystone XL pipeline before a new route has been submitted and assessed."