

FLORIDIANS FOR BETTER



TRANSPORTATION

Federal Update – August 2004

Another Short-Term Extension

Late on July 22nd, the House and Senate passed another “clean” extension of the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century. This extension is the fifth since TEA-21 expired September 2003 and will provide states with additional highway funding through September 24th and transit funding through the end of the fiscal year – September 30th.

Originally, the House proposed a two-month extension of the highway and transit programs with an additional \$2 billion in funding for high priority projects that would have been distributed at a later date. However, because House Appropriators and conservatives objected to the additional spending, the proposal was pulled from consideration.

Given that the highway extension only provides funding through September 24th, Congress will be forced to pass another extension once it returns from its six-week summer recess (July 23 – September 7) to ensure the remaining highway funds are distributed before the end of the Federal Fiscal Year on September 30th.

Outlook for Reauthorization

With the House and Senate in recess for the month of August, conference committee staff members will be evaluating the differences between the recent offer by House conferees -- \$284 billion in spending (roughly \$5 billion more than the House-passed bill) and Chairman Inhofe’s recent offer which includes \$289 billion in spending (roughly \$12 billion below the Senate-passed bill).

Although it appears that the White House supports the \$284 billion reauthorization package that has been offered by House conferees, it remains unclear whether or not such a funding level is high enough to remedy the donor/donee issue as well as other funding priorities in the House and Senate passed bills.

Florida's Bottom Line

Congress should enact a well-funded, long-term reauthorization bill that ensures each state receives back no less than 95% of their federal gas tax dollars. If this important task can be accomplished this year ... GREAT. But if not, the reauthorization of TEA-21 should be postponed until after the 2004 Presidential election.

FBT – Your “Voice” for Transportation!

Douglas J. Callaway, President – FBT
136 S. Bronough Street, Tallahassee, Florida 32301 - (850) 521-1256
dcallaway@bettertransportation.org
www.bettertransportation.org