

The Federal Flyer

Congress Approves Transportation Appropriations Conference Report Measure Provides Record \$58 Billion for FY 2001

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By a vote of 344-50, the U. S. House of Representatives on Friday approved the conference report on H.R. 4475, the FY 2001 appropriations bill for the U.S. Department of Transportation and Related Agencies. Later in the day, the United States Senate voted 78-10 to send the report to the president's desk. H.R. 4475 as approved by Congress honors the funding principles of the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA 21) and the Wendall H. Ford Aviation Investment Act for the 21st Century (FAIR 21). Altogether, the bill provides \$58 billion in budgetary resources for the nation's transportation programs, a 14 percent increase or \$2.7 billion more than in FY 2000.

Program Funding Highlights. The conference report provides \$30.7 billion for the federal-aid highway programs for FY 2001. This means that, once the president signs the measure into law, for the first time ever Texas will receive more than \$2.0 billion in federal-aid highway funds. The report also includes an additional \$2.7 billion in highway funding above the levels guaranteed by TEA 21, including \$1.4 billion for miscellaneous highway projects earmarked in the bill, \$600 million for the Woodrow Wilson Bridge, \$55 million for Appalachian highways, and \$720 million in emergency funding for repairing highways damaged by floods and other recent natural disasters.

The Federal Transit Administration is funded at \$6.3 billion for FY 2001, an 8 percent increase over the FY 2000 level. The conference report also includes earmarked funding for New Starts and Bus Discretionary program projects in Texas. The Texas Rural Transit Vehicle Replacement Program is slated to receive \$4 million in FY 2001. (See the table on page 3 for more project information.)

As mentioned above, the conference report honors FAIR 21 and provides \$3.2 billion for the Airport Improvement Program. Texas expects to receive more than \$36 million for the state's general aviation and reliever airports in FY 2001. The table on page 3 also depicts earmarks in the AIP for certain Texas airport projects.

In its second year in existence, the new Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration is slated to receive \$269 million in funding, a 150 percent increase in funding over FY 2000.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration will receive \$395 million in FY 2001. Amtrak will be funded at \$521 million in FY 2001.

Key Policy Provisions. The conference report also includes compromise language regarding the establishment of a national 0.08 Blood Alcohol Content standard for DWI. This language introduces sanctions against states' highway funds if states do not enact the law by FY 2004. The compromise language phases-in the maximum 8% transfer sanction beginning with 2% of highway funding in FY 2004 and increasing by 2% each year through FY 2007, when the transfer amount reaches and holds at 8% per year. FHWA is authorized to restore a state's transferred funds once the state adopts the 0.08 BAC law. The Texas Legislature enacted the state 0.08 BAC law in 1999, making the state eligible to receive federal incentive grant funds. The existing incentive grant program is not affected by the new sanction language.

President Clinton has indicated that he intends to sign the measure into law when it reaches his desk.



Senate Ethanol Mandate Proposal May Wait Until Next Session Shuster and Archer Indicate Opposition

Congress is unlikely to approve a Senate bill (S. 2962) banning the controversial gasoline additive methyl tertiary butyl ether (MTBE) this year. The bill's best opportunity to move forward quickly is as a rider, or amendment, to one of the appropriations bills not yet passed by Congress. However, the bill is stirring up too much controversy for it to go unchallenged. This means that the measure is more likely to come up in the next session of Congress, which convenes in January.

MTBE, an additive used in reformulated gasoline to reduce emissions, has been found to contaminate drinking water supplies across the nation. This discovery prompted the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to urge Congress to phase it out and consider alternatives such as ethanol. If MTBE is banned, refiners will most likely use ethanol in order to comply with EPA requirements for cleaner-burning reformulated gasoline. But ethanol is difficult and expensive to transport to the major refining areas in the Gulf Coast and to gasoline blenders near the major East Coast markets.

In September, **House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee Chairman Bud Shuster** (R - Pennsylvania) and **Ways and Means Committee Chairman Bill Archer** (R - Texas) told **House Speaker Dennis Hastert** (R - Illinois) that a ban on MTBE would increase motor fuel costs and take a significant amount of revenue from the Highway Trust Fund. Since ethanol-based fuels are subject to a partial fuels tax exemption, using ethanol will reduce the amount of tax money that flows into the Highway Trust Fund, and gasoline consumer prices will rise because ethanol—compared to MTBE—is more expensive and difficult to produce and market, the congressmen said. The opposition of these two congressmen reduces the likelihood that Congress will come to a quick agreement on the matter.

The Senate measure, approved by the Committee on Environment and Public Works earlier this summer and sponsored by Committee **Chairman Bob Smith** (R - New Hampshire), would ban use of MTBE within four years, promote the use of ethanol in gasoline over the next decade, direct money toward the cleanup of leaking underground fuel tanks, and have the EPA issue new regulations governing the quality of transportation fuels.

FY 2001 Transportation Appropriations Earmarks - Texas

Program	Project	Conference Funding
FAA Airport Discretionary Grants	Abilene Regional Airport	\$2,000,000
	George Bush Intercontinental Airport	\$2,000,000
	Houston Southwest Airport	\$500,000
	Kelly USA air cargo study	\$200,000
	Brazoria County Airport	\$500,000
	Sugar Land Municipal Airport	\$2,000,000
	Alliance Airport	\$8,000,000
	Robert Gray Army Airfield	\$2,000,000
ITS Deployment	San Antonio HAR Implementation on IH 35	\$100,000
	Beaumont Regional ITS Architecture & Deployment Plan	\$150,000
	College Station (TTI)	\$1,800,000
	Corpus Christi (vehicle dispatching)	\$1,000,000
	Williamson County/Round Rock ITS Integration	\$1,000,000
	Austin 911 RDMT Project Integration	\$250,000
	Texas Border CVO Stations—Phase I	\$500,000
	Corpus Christi Integration of Railroad Crossing Information with Rural EMS	\$1,000,000
	Seabrook	\$1,200,000
Bus and Bus Facilities	Austin Capitol Metro buses	\$500,000
	Brazos Transit District buses & bus facilities	\$500,000
	Waco Transit Administration and Maintenance Facility	\$1,650,000
	Corpus Christi RTA buses & bus facilities	\$1,000,000
	DART buses & bus facilities	\$2,000,000
	El Paso buses & bus facilities	\$1,000,000
	Fort Worth Transit Authority buses & bus facilities	\$3,000,000
	Fort Worth Intermodal Transportation Center	\$3,500,000
	Fort Worth Independent Transportation Network	\$250,000
	Galveston buses & bus facilities	\$250,000

Table Continues on Page 4.

FY 2001 Transportation Appropriations Earmarks - Texas

Program	Project	Conference Funding
Bus and Bus Facilities (cont.)	Houston Main Street Transit Corridor Improvements	\$1,000,000
	Lubbock buses & bus facilities	\$1,000,000
	Texas Rural Transit Vehicle Fleet Replacement Program	\$4,000,000
	Harris County buses and bus facilities	\$2,000,000
Transit New Starts	Austin Capitol Metro light rail	\$1,000,000
	DART light rail	\$70,000,000
	Galveston Rail Trolley extension	\$1,000,000
	Houston Metro Regional Bus Plan	\$10,750,000
	Houston Advanced Transit Project	\$2,500,000
Job Access and Reverse Commute Program	Corpus Christi RTA	\$550,000
Miscellaneous Highway Projects	US 281 Interchanges	\$10,000,000
	US 77 Interchanges	\$12,500,000
Ferry Boats & Ferry Terminal Facilities	Port of Corpus Christi (North Harbor)	\$1,000,000
National Corridor Planning and Development Program	I-35 corridor expansion, Waco	\$1,325,000
	I-69 corridor, Texas	\$3,000,000
	Radio Road overpass, Sulphur Springs	\$1,350,000
Transportation & Community & System Preservation (TCSP) Pilot Program	Houston Main Street Connectivity Project	\$750,000
	Fort Worth trolley study	\$750,000
Total	44 Projects	\$162,325,000

The *Federal Flyer* is a publication of the TxDOT Legislative Affairs Office. It is intended to provide up-to-date information on major legislative activities in the 106th Congress for the management of the Texas Department of Transportation, state leaders, and others interested in Texas transportation issues. This report will also feature key activities in the national transportation community. Sources include news services and staff reports.

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