



Transfer

Surface Transportation Policy Project's Electronic Update

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Announcements



Rail-Volution is an annual conference on building livable communities with transit, through education, advocacy and increasing overall federal, state and local funds available for transit. This year's conference is in Atlanta, GA on Sept. 11-14.

[Click here](#) for more info.

[Transfer Archives](#)

August 28, 2003; Volume IX, Issue 17

House to Consider Fate of Amtrak, Enhancements After Labor Day

As Congress resumes its work after Labor Day, the full House is scheduled to take action Thursday, September 4 on the Fiscal Year '04 Transportation-Treasury Appropriations Bill (H.R. 2989). This is the legislation that eliminates the Transportation Enhancements program, underfunds Amtrak to the point where a system shutdown is expected, makes it harder to build new rail and other fixed guideway projects, and cuts funding to the Jobs Access and Reverse Commute program substantially below the levels TEA-21 guaranteed.




Representatives Tom Petri (R-WI), John Olver (D-MA) and Bill Lipinski (D-IL) and others are leading a bipartisan effort to restore the Enhancements program during House floor on the funding bill. The House Appropriations Committee narrowly defeated an Olver amendment to strike the offending language, which essentially has the appropriators making decisions about TEA-21 renewal policy, an area traditionally reserved to the authorizing Committees. Reps. Petri and Lipinski serve as the Chair and Ranking Democratic Member of the Subcommittee that is responsible for developing legislation to renew TEA-21, the nation's surface transportation law that expires September 30.

During action on H.R. 2989, the House is also expected to debate Amtrak's funding level, which the Appropriations Committee set at \$900 million. Amtrak President David Gunn has already informed Congress that this level of commitment will lead to the shutdown of the nation's intercity passenger rail system. A bipartisan majority of the House previously wrote to House Appropriations Committee leaders to indicate their support for Amtrak's request of \$1.8 billion for the new fiscal year.

The Committee bill also includes "report language" that will affect local areas seeking to build new rail transit or other fixed guideway projects under the "New Starts" program administered by the Federal Transit Administration. While not carrying the full force of law, the Committee report endorses the 50/50 matching share for new starts that was proposed by the Bush Administration (current law is 80/20). In addition, the Committee report sets forth new criteria that will guide what projects the Committee will fund, going beyond what the authorizing committees set in the law and what FTA requires. The Committee's new criteria are likely to make it more difficult for local areas to bring these major transit projects to fruition. While the bill essentially holds overall transit funding at current spending levels, funding for the Jobs Access and Reverse Commute (JARC) program is reduced to \$85 million, well below the guaranteed spending level of \$150 million provided under TEA-21 for the final year of the program.

The Senate Appropriations Committee is expected to consider its version of the measure in mid-September.

TEA-21 Extension Legislation Moves Up On Agenda

As Congress resumes its work in September, 

the committees responsible for reauthorizing TEA-21 are expected to focus their attention on what legislation is needed to keep the Federal Highway Administration operating and funds flowing to states, MPOs and transit providers after September 30 when the nation's surface transportation law expires.

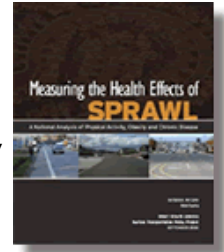


An extension bill is needed to keep critical provisions of current law in force as well as any necessary new provisions so that disruptions will not occur once the new federal fiscal year begins October 1. The separate extension legislation is still needed even though Congress is expected to act next month on appropriations legislation providing funds for the new fiscal year. This issue is now a top priority for the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee and the three Senate committees that authorize federal surface transportation policies.

Although no decision has been made on the length of an extension, it is likely to run less than one year, perhaps one month at first and later six months, keeping pressure on the authorizing committees to continue their efforts to craft multi-year renewal legislation.

Reports Link Sprawl & Health, Underscore Need for Bicycling & Walking Investments

On August 28, the American Journal of Health Promotion and the American Journal of Public Health published the first national study to show a direct link between sprawl, physical activity and health. The peer-reviewed study, "Relationship between Urban Sprawl and Physical Activity, Obesity, and Morbidity," found that people living in automobile-dependent neighborhoods are likely to walk less, weigh more, and are more likely to suffer from high blood pressure.



A companion report issued on the same day by Smart Growth America and the Surface Transportation Policy Project, "Measuring the Health Effects of Sprawl," which provides county-level analysis of the metropolitan areas studied, further demonstrates the need for public investment in community infrastructure. The studies come just days before the U.S. House of Representatives is poised to consider a transportation spending measure that threatens the elimination of the Transportation Enhancements program, which has accounted for a substantial share of all federal commitments to pedestrian safety improvements and other walking and bicycling facilities.

"Communities with a wider variety of transportation options, including walking and bicycling, are healthier places to live," said Anne Canby, President of the Surface Transportation Policy Project. "We urge Congress to remember this when voting on the transportation appropriations bill in early September: A vote to restore critical funds for bicycle and pedestrian facilities is a vote for public health."

Many communities around the country already have plans in the works to build more paths, bike lanes, and sidewalks, and are taking creative approaches to public transit and development. But these plans may fall through if federal funds for Transportation Enhancements and other programs for multi-modal investments dry up or are curtailed.

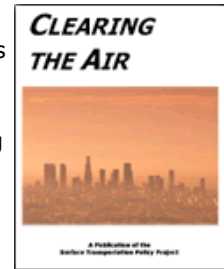
For more information about the report, including state factsheets and practical steps communities can take today to increase physical activity, see the report, "[Measuring the Health Effects of Sprawl](#)."

For information on Transportation Enhancements in each state, [click here](#).

For more tools and resources, [click here](#).

[New Report on Air Quality, Public Health Threats from Cars and Heavy Duty Vehicles](#)

According to a new report from the Surface Transportation Policy Project, nearly half of all Americans - 133 million people - are breathing unhealthy air. The report outlines how air quality in dozens of metropolitan areas has gotten worse over the last decade, while citing new scientific studies that link air pollution to a host of public health issues including asthma, heart disease and certain cancers. The study concludes that transportation is a major contributor to air pollution nationwide and recommends ways Congress can affirm clean air protections and expand funding commitments for transportation alternatives like transit, rail and buses that reduce traffic and air pollution.



"Our study shows air pollution continues to be a serious health problem and transportation sources are a significant part of that problem. The public deserves a federal transportation program that lowers their exposure to unhealthy air and delivers transportation choices beyond simply having to turn an ignition key," said STPP President Anne Canby.

The study, entitled "Clearing the Air, Public Health Threats from Cars and Heavy Duty Vehicles- Why We Need to Protect Federal Clean Air," ranks metropolitan areas nationwide by the highest number of days of unhealthy air pollution levels over the last three years using new data from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Cities that top the list of worst include Riverside-San Bernardino, CA; Fresno, CA; Los Angeles, CA; Sacramento, CA; Pittsburgh, PA; Knoxville, TN; Birmingham, AL; and Cleveland, OH. The report also includes state fact sheets that identify cities in each state with the worst air pollution and the prevalence of asthma by metro area.

To view the report and related information, [click here](#).

[Public Involvement & the NEPA Process; Community Input Threatened](#)

A new report from the Sierra Club and the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) released August 18 highlights projects from around the country that have benefited from the National Environmental Policy Act's (NEPA) environmental review and public participation processes. The report, a response to "streamlining" proposals that threaten the NEPA and related processes, argues that "public participation and environmental review are fundamentally important to the development of high quality projects and protection of natural resources."



"The Road to Better Transportation Projects" profiles a dozen projects across the U.S., including the Hoover Dam Bypass in Nevada, I-70 in Colorado, Paris Pike in Kentucky, Alligator Alley in Florida, and the Route 50 Corridor in Virginia.

[Click here](#) for the full report.



Transfer is written and edited by John Goldener of the Surface Transportation Policy Project, with contributions by Michelle Ernst, Nancy Jakowitsch, and Kevin McCarty. Readers are invited to reprint newsletter items; proper citation is appreciated. If you are not currently subscribed, please send us a note via e-mail to: transfer@transact.org. Be sure to include your full mailing address and name of your organization, phone and fax numbers. For comments and suggestions about Transfer's content, contact John Goldener at jgoldener@transact.org.

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