

Washington Update

COUNTY OF SANTA BARBARA

June 2, 2021

SURFACE TRANSPORTATION PROGRAMS

We are continuing to work with NACo, the National Association of County Engineers, and other local government stakeholders in support of legislation to reauthorize federal surface transportation programs.

In the Senate, the Environment and Public Works Committee took the first step in the reauthorization process on May 26 by passing the *Surface Transportation Reauthorization Act of 2021 (STRA)*, which is a five-year, \$304 billion highway funding reauthorization bill. Other Senate Committees will have to draft portions of the legislation that will authorize the rail and public transit provisions as well as the revenue provisions that would be needed to pay for this spending. For this reason, the overall process in the Senate will be slower than the House.

The STRA would reauthorize the key federal-aid highway formula programs with significant funding increases over the life of the bill. Other provisions in the bill of interest to the County include:

- Continued funding for local bridges through an increased “off-system” bridge set-aside in the Surface Transportation Block Grant Program,
- Additional opportunities for county funding through a \$3.265 billion Bridge Investment Program,
- A new \$2.5 billion program for Alternative Refueling/Charging Infrastructure Grants,
- \$4.8 billion for Nationally Significant Freight and Highway Projects (INFRA), and
- a new Carbon Reduction Formula Program, funded at \$6.42 billion.

The House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee is expected to release a draft this week of its version of the multi-year reauthorization bill, with a markup of the bill planned for June 9. Representative Carbajal, who is a member of the Committee, has been actively supporting the County’s transportation priorities, including funding for projects in the County and increased funding for maintenance of local roads.

The House legislation will build on H.R. 2, the *Moving Forward Act*, which was passed by the House last July, but which was not taken up by the Senate during the 116th Congress. H.R. 2 proposed a \$494 billion reauthorization of surface transportation programs, which was then made the core of a larger effort to fund other forms of infrastructure.

INFRASTRUCTURE

In addition to the highway bill, President Biden and Congressional Democrats are pushing for aggressive investments by the federal government to revamp the economy and stimulate economic growth. In late March, President Biden released an outline of his proposed \$2.2 trillion *American Jobs Plan*, which includes proposals for significant spending on transportation, drinking water and wastewater, broadband, clean power, affordable housing, resiliency upgrades and numerous other categories.

While the reauthorization of surface transportation programs is moving ahead through the normal legislative process that requires bipartisan support for action in the Senate, the process for enacting the American Jobs Plan is still very much up in the air. There is the expectation that some or all of the Biden proposals will be moved through the expedited procedures of budget reconciliation. However,

negotiations in the Senate are still ongoing over whether a more bipartisan and limited approach will be taken. Speaker Pelosi has said she wants to vote on the infrastructure package before the House breaks for the July 4 holiday.

FY 2022 APPROPRIATIONS

Just before Memorial Day weekend, the Biden Administration released its fiscal year 2022 budget request to Congress, which provides the detailed funding proposals that are needed for Congress to move ahead on appropriations legislation. The budget includes a \$1.52 trillion discretionary request made up of \$769 billion in non-defense discretionary funding (a 16 percent increase) and \$753 billion for national defense programs (a 1.7 percent increase).

The House Appropriations Committee has announced that markups of the 12 annual appropriations bills for fiscal year 2022 will take place in late June, with floor action by the full House expected to follow in July. We are continuing to advocate in coordination with NACo and other local government stakeholders for the County's funding priorities for the fiscal year 2022 appropriations cycle. We have also provided our local delegation with budget justifications for their use in supporting key County programs with the Appropriations Committees.

CLEAN ENERGY

The Senate Finance Committee marked up Chair Wyden's (D-OR), the *Clean Energy for America Act*, on May 26. The bill, which focuses on tax provisions that are under the Committee's jurisdiction, is one of several initiatives to support clean energy that are moving through the legislative process. The legislation includes provisions to increase electric vehicle tax credits, fund EV charging infrastructure and incentivize use or production of alternative fuels.

CALIFORNIA WILDERNESS

We contacted the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee to request action on

Senator Padilla's S. 1459, the *Protecting Unique and Beautiful Landscapes by Investing in California (PUBLIC) Lands Act*. S. 1459 was recently introduced with Senator Feinstein as the primary cosponsor and includes provisions to increase protections for over 1 million acres of Federal public lands throughout northwest California, the Central Coast, and Los Angeles. Among the provisions included are the protections proposed by Representative Carbajal's H.R. 973, the *Central Coast Heritage Protection Act*, to protect 250,000 acres of new and expanded wilderness in the Los Padres National Forest and the Carrizo Plain National Monument, protect wild and scenic rivers, and designate the Condor National Recreation Trail, which we highlighted in our letter to Committee members. We also thanked Senator Padilla and Senator Feinstein for their leadership on this issue.

WILDFIRE PREVENTION

We are working in support of Senator Feinstein's S. 1855, the *Wildfire Emergency Act*, which would provide additional funding and policy authorizations to help reduce wildfire dangers, including provisions to restore forests, create more resilient communities, and allow FEMA hazard mitigation funding to be used for the installation of fire-resistant wires and infrastructure. Senator Padilla is a cosponsor of S. 1855 and Representative Carbajal has cosponsored the House companion bill, H.R. 3534.

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