

# Washington Update

COUNTY OF SANTA BARBARA

May 22, 2014

## WATER RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT

As a joint House/Senate Conference Committee continued to negotiate on Water Resources Development legislation, we reiterated the County's support for critical provisions in the measure. In mid-May, conferees released their conference report as H.R. 3080, the *Water Resources Reform and Development Act (WRRDA)*. The final version includes provisions directing the Army Corps of Engineers to review and revise its vegetation management policy to take into account regional characteristics and habitat for species of concern, as well as provisions to streamline environmental permitting. It would also establish a Public-Private Partnership Pilot Program and increase opportunities for non-Federal interests to support or expedite projects. WRRDA includes a provision to de-authorize \$18 billion in "inactive" projects that have not received USACE construction funds. This provision only applies to projects authorized before WRDA 2007, and since Lower Mission Creek's authorization was increased in 2007, the project is arguably protected. Because of the County's concerns, Congresswoman Capps has offered to contact the Corps to ensure a favorable review once the legislation is enacted. The full House passed the agreement by a vote of 412-4 on May 21, and the Senate approved it the next day, 91-7.

## WORKFORCE INVESTMENT

Since the beginning of the year we have worked with relevant stakeholders to urge the House and Senate committees of jurisdiction to move forward in completing legislation to reauthorize the Workforce Investment Act. The House passed H.R. 803, the *Supporting Knowledge and Investing in Lifelong Skills (SKILLS) Act*, last year, but in the Senate, S. 1356, the *Workforce Investment Act*, was stalled on the Senate calendar after having been approved on a bipartisan basis by the HELP Committee. Leaders of the House and Senate committees have now announced a

bipartisan agreement on final bill language. The compromise would eliminate 15 federal job training programs - including 14 workforce training programs and one in higher education - and place a focus on training for "in demand" jobs. It would reduce the size of Workforce Investment Boards (WIBs), from 43 to 33 members at the state level, and 23 to 19 at the local level. The measure sets out specific authorized appropriations for each program through fiscal 2020, with annual adjustments. The final language will be amended into the House-passed bill, H.R. 803. House leaders have said that they will not take up the bill until it has been approved by the Senate, for logistical reasons.

## MAP 21 REAUTHORIZATION

As the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee prepared to take action on draft legislation to reauthorize surface transportation programs, we contacted committee members to reiterate the County's support for a multi-year reauthorization of the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Act (MAP-21). We emphasized support for inclusion of a fully-funded Highway Bridge Program that addresses all three categories of bridges - National Highway System, on-system, and off-system. We also advocated for increased funding for pavement preservation and resources to maintain existing infrastructure, arguing that County roads are deteriorating faster than they can be repaired. The committee marked up and approved its bill on May 15, and we provided County staff with both the text of the measure and a section-by-section summary prepared by committee staff. Transit-related provisions of surface transportation fall under the jurisdiction of the Senate Banking Committee, which has been holding hearings in anticipation of drafting its portion of the MAP-21 reauthorization legislation. In the interim, we continue to work with CSAC and NACo on efforts to strengthen resources for both on-system and off-system bridges in the measure.

**HOUSING/COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**

The House Appropriations Committee is continuing to move forward in drafting its FY 2015 funding bills. On May 20, the committee approved its version of the *FY 2015 Transportation, Housing and Urban Development (HUD), and Related Agencies Appropriations* bill. In general, funding is consistent with FY 2014 enacted funding as a result of the *Bipartisan Budget Act* enacted last December, but some significant programs would be cut. The measure would provide \$3.06 billion for the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), a 1% decrease, and would only provide \$700 million for the HOME Program compared to \$1 billion in FY 2014. Other proposed funding levels include: level funding of \$2.1 billion for Homeless Assistance grants; a \$30 million cut in for Housing for People with AIDS (HOPWA) to \$303 million; level funding of \$75 million for HUD-Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing Program (HUD-VASH), and a \$47 million increase in funding for elderly housing to \$420 million. Section 8 funding would be increased slightly to \$19.3 billion.

**FEDERAL CHILD CARE FUNDING**

We contacted the House Committee on Education and the Workforce to advocate in support of legislation to reauthorize the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG). CCDBG has not been reauthorized in 17 years, and we emphasized the critical importance of adequate funding for child care to the County's ability to help low income families transition to self-sufficiency. We also asked our local Congressional delegation to weigh in with the committee in support of the program. In March, the Senate overwhelmingly approved Senator Mikulski's S. 1086, the *Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) Act*, on a vote of 96-2.

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