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Surface Transportation Policy Project's Electronic Update

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Two-month TEA-21 Extension Bill Sent to President

On April 29, just one day before the TEA-21 law was set to expire for the third time, the Senate passed a two-month extension bill (H.R. 4219), sending the legislation to the President for his signature. The U.S. House of Representatives initiated the extension measure, approving it April 28 on a 410- 0 vote.



This extension through June 30 follows the same rules for allocating federal highway, transit and safety funds that are now in effect. Under the measure, states and local agencies will receive a prorated share (i.e. 2/12) of the program funds that have been previously appropriated for Fiscal Year 2004. It is now assumed that before June 30 the next extension bill will either provide a few additional weeks to complete negotiations on a final six-year agreement or it will extend the TEA-21 law through September 30, 2005 to coincide with the end of the next federal fiscal year (FY'05).

Congressional Leaders, White House Struggle over Funding Levels

The challenges that Congress overcame in moving this extension are modest compared to the debate that is now underway among Congressional Republican leaders and White House officials over funding totals for the six-year reauthorization bill.

The Bush Administration is strongly defending its \$256 billion renewal request, emphasizing that it represents a 21% increase over TEA-21 spending levels. In contrast, the Senate approved a \$318 billion total program commitment in its "SAFETEA" legislation (S. 1072), with the House voting last month to approve a \$275 billion renewal package (now estimated to cost about \$284 billion).

President Bush and Administration officials continue to argue that deficit concerns and other budgetary priorities dictate restraint in federal transportation commitments during this

renewal cycle. Senate transportation leaders and many Senators on both sides of the aisle are insisting that the Senate's \$318 billion total is a threshold spending level. There is also considerable support in the House for a stronger multi-year funding commitment. Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist (R-TN) and House Speaker Dennis Hastert (R-IL), however, have signaled their intent to work with the White House and reach an agreement on funding levels, ensuring that President Bush will not be forced to veto a conference agreement.

Decisions on Conferees, Funding Levels Slated for Early May

Discussions among Senate Republican leaders and White House officials are ongoing, as the legislative calendar dictates that a decision needs to be made soon so that Congressional leaders can act upon another longer-term extension or develop a full six-year reauthorization plan. The back and forth funding talks which are limited to Congressional Republican leaders and White House officials has rankled Congressional Democratic leaders who fear that a decision on what the nation commits to its surface transportation infrastructure throughout the remainder of this decade will be decided without them. Moreover, there are concerns that these negotiations will set the tone for how Democratic transportation leaders will be involved in the many funding and policy decisions as a House/Senate conference committee agreement is hammered out.

In addition to the debate over funding, Senate Majority Leader Frist has indicated his intention to force action on the appointment of Senate conferees, a point of contention with Minority Leader Tom Daschle (D-SD) who has insisted upon firm assurances about the participation of Democrats in the conference committee deliberations.

Aging Americans: Stranded Without Options

What happens to older people when they stop driving in the U.S.? This was the question that spurred a new study by STPP that examined travel behavior of the 65+ population, based on recently released data from the FHWA, the National Household Transportation Survey of 2001 (NHTS). The April 14 STPP report was released in collaboration with AARP and the American Public Transit Association.

The report found that currently, more than 1 in 5 (21 percent) of the 65+ population do not drive – about 6.8 million people. It also describes the extent to which not driving affects these

people's travel behavior: over half of older non-drivers stay home on a given day, about three times the rate of drivers in the same age group. Compared to drivers 65 and over, non-drivers make two-thirds fewer trips for family, social, and religious purposes; less than half as many trips to eat or shop; and 15 percent fewer trips to their medical provider. The report also points out that the U.S. has largely created a transportation system in which those who do not drive are at an extreme disadvantage when it comes to getting around in most places.

Older African Americans, Latinos and Asian-Americans, the report notes, are disproportionately affected by this phenomenon. Among these populations, over a third stays home on a given day, as compared to 22 percent among older white people. One factor in this equation is the fact that a higher share of these populations do not drive: 42 percent of older African Americans, 39 percent of older Latinos, and 45 percent of older Asian-Americans do not drive, as compared to 16 percent of the older white population. Rural and small-town aging populations are also disproportionately affected, as public transportation options and places to walk are often lacking in these communities. Overall, in neighborhoods that are built more densely, older non-drivers are more likely to get out each day, and much more likely to use public transportation and walk.

With an expected increase in the 65+ population from 35 million today to 62 million by 2025, these issues will continue to grow in importance. Other studies already document that as people age, they often become less willing or able to drive, making it necessary to depend on alternative methods of transportation. The findings of the report call attention to the need for more transportation choices for the rapidly aging population and the reality that alternatives to driving are too limited in many places.

For the full report, see <http://www.transact.org/report.asp?id=232> .

Some selected news stories and editorials covering the report:

Atlanta Journal-Constitution editorial
"Give seniors alternatives to autos", April 21st
<http://www.ajc.com/opinion/content/opinion/0404/21seniors.html>

South Florida Sun-Sentinel editorial
"Give elderly mass transit", April 15th
<http://www.sun-sentinel.com/news/opinion/editorial/sfl-editttransittapr15,0,1738990.story?coll=sfla-news-editorial>

San Jose Mercury News

"Left Behind: Unable to drive, thousands of senior citizens exiled to their homes", April 15 <http://www.mercurynews.com/mld/mercurynews/news/world/8438762.htm?1c>

Nearly 500 Counties Fail New EPA Smog Standards

U.S. EPA Administrator Mike Leavitt April 15 released the final designations for counties failing to meet the new health-based ozone standard. All together, 474 counties in more than 30 states failed the new 8-hour ozone standard (which will replace the current 1-hour ozone standard). As an updated analysis by NRDC and STPP reveals, transportation is the primary source of smog-forming emissions in most of these counties. Overall, mobile sources such as cars and trucks account for 35 percent of the smog precursors NOx and VOCs nationwide.

With Congress preparing for conference deliberations on the House and Senate TEA-21 reauthorization bills, air quality is expected to be a key topic of discussion. Questions remain as to how Congress will resolve differences between the House and Senate bills on transportation conformity provisions. In addition, EPA's new ozone designations will have important consequences for the apportionment of funds under the popular CMAQ program.

Under the Senate proposal, areas out of attainment with the new 8-hour ozone standard, as well as those out of attainment for fine particulate matter (PM 2.5) will join areas failing to meet carbon monoxide (CO) standards in eligibility for CMAQ funds. (Experts expect the current 1-hour ozone standard to be phased out by the end of 2005.) An important point is that under the new weighting factors proposed by the Senate, areas with severe ozone problems (such as Los Angeles) will no longer receive "extra credit" in competing for CMAQ funding. Under the Senate's TEA-21 renewal proposal (S. 1027), all areas out of attainment for 8-hour ozone will receive the same weighting factor ("1"). This change could mean that states with major air pollution problems where the need is most critical will get a smaller share of CMAQ funding. The House passed bill (H.R. 3550) does not address the new 8-hour ozone or PM2.5 standards, leaving this question to conference committee deliberations.

To read more about the new ozone standard, and to see the list of counties failing the standard in your state, go to <http://www.epa.gov/ozonedesignations/>

The NRDC/STPP analysis can be found at <http://www.transact.org/nrdc/ozone.htm>

STPP President Anne Canby's statement on the new smog standards is available at <http://www.transact.org/news.asp?id=47>

New Report Finds Significant Benefits to Rail Transit

A new report from Todd Litman at the Victoria Transport Policy Institute (<http://www.vtpi.org>) evaluates the benefits of rail transit and finds that cities with larger, well-established rail systems have significantly higher per capita transit ridership, lower average per capita vehicle ownership and mileage, less traffic congestion, lower traffic death rates and lower consumer transportation expenditures than otherwise comparable cities. According to the VTPI report, "Comprehensive Evaluation of Rail Transit Benefits," as rail transit systems expand, the social and environmental benefits they provide tend to increase. VTPI's analysis shows that the parking, vehicle, and congestion cost savings from the nation's current rail system exceed the total U.S. public transit investment.

A critique of Randal O'Toole's "Great Rail Disasters" (2004), the report finds that many claims in Great Rail Disasters are inaccurate, based on inappropriate and biased analysis. Using the best current practices to evaluate rail transit benefits, "Comprehensive Evaluation of Rail Transit" concludes that rail investments can be a cost effective way to improve urban transportation.

To read the report, please visit <http://www.vtpi.org/railben.htm>

World Health Day Draws Global Attention to Road Safety



Hundreds of events in 100 countries around the globe marked the 56th annual World Health Day (WHD) on April 7. The theme for this year's WHD, "Road Safety Is No Accident," aimed to raise awareness about the health and societal impacts of traffic fatalities and injuries. Globally, road crashes are now the second leading cause of death for people aged 5 to 29, and the third leading cause of death for those aged 30 to 44. Road crashes kill approximately 1.2 million people worldwide per year, and injure another 50 million. The costs of these tragedies run as high as \$518 billion per year, about 1 to 2 percent of each nation's gross national product. In low- and middle-income countries, pedestrians and cyclists are most at risk.

In the accompanying "World report on road traffic injury

prevention," issued jointly by the World Health Organization (WHO) and the World Bank, road safety is identified as a social equity issue, with the poor and vulnerable in society bearing a disproportionate share of the fatalities, injuries, and social costs. The report advocates for promoting efficient patterns of land use namely, smart growth, which reduce the need to make vehicle trips and provide an opportunity for incidental physical activity: "It would also be to the health sector's gain if – with safer conditions on the roads guaranteed for pedestrians and cyclists – more people were to adopt the healthier lifestyle of walking or cycling, without fearing for their safety."

The United Nations General Assembly followed up the World Health Day with an historic plenary session devoted to road safety. The UN session, the first ever to focus on road safety, gathered governments and UN agencies to discuss implementation of the WHO report's recommendations.

For more on Road Safety Is No Accident, please visit <http://www.who.int/world-health-day/2004/en/>

To read the PIRG report, please visit <http://uspirg.org/uspirg.asp?id2=12484&id3=USPIRG&>

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