

TRANSPORTATION WEEKLY

UPDATE – HOUSE SUBCOMMITTEE APPROVES HIGHWAY BILL

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 24, 2009 – 4:30 P.M.

The House Highways and Transit Subcommittee has approved, by voice vote and without amendment, the 775-page draft surface transportation reauthorization bill released earlier this week by Transportation and Infrastructure Committee chairman James Oberstar.

The five-hour markup session, which was recessed five times for votes on the House floor, was basically ceremonial, as Democrats had agreed not to offer any amendments during the subcommittee markup and Republicans had agreed to offer a few amendments but then withdraw them without a vote in the hopes that the chairmen and ranking minority members would continue to work on those issues before the bill is marked up in full committee.

Oberstar would like to have a full committee markup in late July, but that is contingent on a financing and revenue deal being reached with the Ways and Means Committee, the Democratic leadership, and the Obama Administration.

The following amendments were offered and then withdrawn during today's subcommittee markup session:

1. Moran (R-KS) amendment allowing states to use not less than five percent of their Critical Asset Investment formula funds on off-system bridges.
2. Gary Miller (R-CA) amendment striking the requirement in section 1508 of the bill that metropolitan planning take into account land use patterns, adequate housing supply, and greenhouse gas emission reductions.
3. Gary Miller (R-CA) amendment making the existing Surface Transportation Project Delivery Pilot Program permanent and ensuring California's continued participation therein.
4. Brown (R-SC) requiring DOT to consider emergency evacuation time, Interstate designation, and Interstate segment completion as factors when evaluating Projects of National Significance.
5. Capito (D-WV) amendment allowing West Virginia a truck weight exemption for trucks up to 126,000 pounds on a specific 11-mile stretch of Interstate 77.
6. Mario Diaz-Balart (R-FL) amendment striking section 1119(a) of the bill which repeals 23 U.S.C. 126 and allowing continued transferability of bridge apportionments.
7. Dent (R-PA) amendment declaring vehicles powered by hydrogen

- blend fuel cells to be “clean fuel vehicles”.
8. Mack (R-FL) amendment repealing Davis-Bacon Act applicability to the federal-aid highway and public transportation programs.
 9. Mario Diaz-Balart (R-FL) amendment expressing the sense of Congress that the final bill should have a 92 percent rate of return for highway donor states.
 10. Fallin (R-OK) amendment raising the threshold for a project having to file a financial plan from \$500 million to \$1 billion.
 11. Fallin (R-OK) amendment exempting trucks carrying certain agricultural shipments from federal hours of service requirements.
 12. Schock (R-IL) amendment requiring the Secretary take into account equitable geographic distribution and rural/urban balance when distributing Projects of National Significance funds.