

Ravalli County Commissioners Office

From: MACO <MACO@mtcounties.org>
Sent: Friday, August 1, 2014 1:01 PM
To: MACO
Subject: NACo update: Congress Passes Short-Term Patch for Transportation Funding

Good morning

Last night Congress passed a short-term patch for the Highway Trust Fund and the current surface transportation law – MAP-21. Below is a quick legislative update and link to a NACo press statement.

Thanks,

Deborah Cox
NACo

Congress Passes Short-Term Patch for Transportation Funding

This week, Congress reached agreement over a short-term patch to keep the Highway Trust Fund solvent and extend the current surface transportation law – Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP-21) – through May of next year. The Highway and Transportation Funding Act, H.R. 5021, was accepted by both chambers after much debate over the length of the patch.

The House initially passed H.R. 5021 on July 15. The House-passed version provided \$11 billion to keep the Highway Trust Fund solvent and extend MAP-21 through May of next year. The bill pays for the \$11 billion patch to the trust fund through a combination of customs users fees, a budget maneuver known as “pension smoothing” (which allows companies to delay contributions to employee pension plans), and a transfer from the leaking underground storage tank fund. The bill passed the House by a vote of 367-55 and went to the Senate.

The Senate took up the House-passed bill on July 29. While the bill was on the floor, the Senate considered four amendments to the legislation – two of which were adopted. The adopted measures included an amendment offered by Sen. Ron Wyden (D-Ore.) to replace the offsets used by the House with an alternative package of offsets. The Senate also adopted an amendment offered by Sen. Tom Carper (D-Del.) along with Sen. Bob Corker (R-Tenn.) and Senate Environment and Public Works Committee Chair Barbara Boxer (D-Calif.). The Carper amendment shortened the length of the patch, providing \$8.2 billion to keep the trust fund solvent and extending MAP-21 until December 20, 2014, with the goal of forcing action on a long-term solution during the lame duck session.

After the Senate amended and approved H.R. 5021, the legislation went back to the House where Republican leadership vowed to oppose the Senate’s changes, primarily due to the shortened length of the patch. Before the House took the bill up on the floor, the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) identified a technical error with the Senate-passed version of the bill. According to CBO, the shortened extension fell short by \$2.4 billion. This error helped House Republicans further justify their opposition to the Senate’s changes and on July 31, the House voted 272-150 to send its original version of the bill back to the Senate. Shortly following the vote, the House concluded their business and prepared to begin a five-week recess period, leaving the Senate with two options: pass the House bill (with no amendments) or let the trust fund go over the cliff.

Being left with little choice, the Senate passed the original version of the House bill in the evening of July 31, providing a patch for the Highway Trust Fund and extending MAP-21 through May of next year. The bill will now go to the President for his signature.

NACo continues to call on Congress to provide long-term certainty for the Highway Trust Fund and a multi-year authorization bill that supports counties' work to strengthen America's surface transportation network.

[NACo's press release on the short term measure](#)

[NACo's Policy Brief on County Surface Transportation Priorities](#)

[County Priorities for MAP-21 Reauthorization](#)

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