



## Transportation + Logistics Federal Funding Opportunities

WASHINGTON, D.C. - Funding is available for a number of local governments in need of funding for Transportation and Infrastructure. This includes funding for highways, bridges, new starts, busses, runway expansions, ferry service, service consolidation and regional planning through the *Livable Communities Initiative*. Congress also has failed to pass the reauthorization for SAFE TEA LU (transportation authorization) which expired last year and provides funding for 5 years for a number of transportation projects. The current extension expires at the end of 2010.

While Congress chose to delay reauthorizing the Transportation Equity Act, they are allowing transportation authorities and road commission's time to shape the debate and the outcome of the legislation, including positioning such entities to secure federal funding through the reauthorization. With a lack of funding coming from the state, now is the perfect opportunity to turn to Washington for federal support.

For example, the current surface transportation law, the Safe, Affordable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act (SAFETEA-LU, P.L. 109-53), was adopted in 2005 and expires on September 30, 2009. To give you some idea of how political this bill was -- When Congress finally passed the last transportation bill in 2005, it took two years and 12 extensions to complete. Although Congress has a bill now drafted, the President wants to put off this measure until after the midterm elections in 2010. A delay in the re-authorization will hinder the planning of transportation projects and perhaps put them in jeopardy of ever getting completed.

At stake is the dwindling Highway Trust Fund, financed by a federal gas tax that pays for repairs to the nation's crumbling infrastructure. At issue is an effort by Congress and the President to set the nation's transportation policy for the rest of the decade and perhaps for decades to come. The outcome will be critical to state and local governments that depend on federal assistance to maintain and improve their transportation systems.

The end game will be the creation of a funding mechanism that will ensure the national transportation system will meet the demands of an expanding population while also accommodating the environmental priorities of those who want to see less road congestion, less accidents and more transit options.

For transportation planning organizations it could mean a modern, sustainable and seamless surface transportation network, that fully integrates and connects the nation's small urban and rural regions with global, metropolitan and neighboring markets. It could also mean increased federal investments in existing and new rural public transportation system, with an emphasis on establishing stronger incentives and program flexibility across the spectrum.

While we will wait for almost a year before Congress will *most likely* pass a transportation bill, Congress continues to debate issues of transit and transportation and will soon debate a "jobs" bill that will contain federal funding for local infrastructure projects. For example, the U.S. House of Representatives passed the "American Clean Energy and Security Act" (H.R. 2454) in June, and the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee is currently developing their version. Both bill contain provisions affecting transit. Although Congress will not pass a transportation bill until next year, there are still opportunities for transit agencies and organizations to secure resources for a variety of projects through existing bills, and help shape funding for future projects by taking a proactive role in advising Congress on what is important to your agency and community.

Just before the summer recess, the FREIGHT bill was introduced in the House (HB 5976) and Senate (S 3629) to define the governments' role in the movement of goods. As Michigan continues to define itself as a leader in logistics, this bill could help shape our role in the movement of goods and help local companies and transportation projects secure funding in that effort.

There are a number of Michigan communities that are also missing out on grants through the DOT such as TIGER grants, funding through HUD Sustainable Communities. This includes funding for improvements to roads, highways and airports.

## AIRPORTS + FAA RE-AUTHORIZATION

As for airport funding and projects, Congress failed again this year to act on a multi-year Federal Aviation Authority (FAA) authorization bill, which includes funding for a number of construction and capital projects. Although both Houses passed their own version, they have yet to reach a consensus on a final version and will most likely not act on it until next year.

## FRASER TREBILCOCK & FRASER CONSULTING

Organizations interested in funding, should contact their local planning organization, MDOT and the gubernatorial campaigns, to put them each on notice about your projects.

Fraser Trebilcock and Fraser Consulting, also can work with you in reaching the appropriate organization to ensure your priorities are the governments. We also can work to build support with the local chambers and other community organizations.

Despite a full agenda, Congress needs to hear from our clients. With limited funds from the state and dwindling budgets all around, it seems that Congress is our only option.

### For more information

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