

03/11/2024

U.S. Senate Passes "Minibus" Spending Package, goes to President next

Please see information from Steve Hall, Executive Vice President of ACEC regarding the "minibus" spending package passed by the U.S. Senate late Friday evening:

The Senate gave final approval to a package of six spending bills that provide funding for federal transportation, water, military construction and other programs that impact our industry. The House has already passed the bill, which now goes to the President for his signature. As we note below, some programs take a hit, but as I mentioned to ENR magazine earlier in the week overall the package represents a good deal that will prevent the shutdown of key federal agencies programs and provide stability in federal funding through to the end of the fiscal year. [Click here](#) for a summary of the consolidated package from Appropriations Committee Republicans and [here](#) for a summary from House Democrats. Both sides have their spin, but the numbers are the same and you will see more detail in the Democratic breakdown. Special thanks to Matt Reiffer for his assistance in pulling some of this information together.

Key elements of the deal – *Transportation*

The bill unlocks the authorized funding levels for highway and transit formula programs under the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA). It also makes no changes to the advanced appropriations for transportation programs included in the IIJA. The final agreement does reduce some supplemental funding for various DOT discretionary grant programs compared to previous years. The budget caps agreed to last year, coupled with inflated housing voucher costs and lower-than-expected offsetting receipts for HUD mortgages, forced the committee to reduce funding for certain capital accounts. In most cases, this means the plus-ups enacted in previous years were not as generous as this year. None of the reductions are as steep as what had originally been proposed in the House. Another contributing factor was the number and size of **local community projects funded through congressionally directed spending (i.e. earmarks)**. That list of projects is [here](#).

On the highway side, the IIJA authorized \$60.835 billion in Highway Trust Fund formula funding for 2024, all of which is made available by the bill. The IIJA also provided an additional \$9.454 billion in advanced appropriations from the General Fund for 2024, and the bill does not change that, either. In addition to those totals, the bill provides \$1.88 billion in congressionally directed community project funding, \$100 million for Appalachian highway development, \$50 million for bridge reconstruction and repair in

states with low population density, and \$10 million for the regional infrastructure accelerator program.

Transit is provided the \$14.0 billion in funding authorized under IIJA for a variety of formula programs from the Transit Account of the Highway Trust Fund, as well as an additional \$4.25 billion in advanced appropriations from the General Fund for 2024. In addition to those totals, the appropriations package provides \$2.205 billion for transit Capital Investment Grants, including \$2.131 billion for new starts. The bill also includes \$206.8 million for designated local transit projects.

Funding for the **Federal Railroad Administration** totals \$3.0 billion, a \$434 million (13 percent) reduction from 2023. Of that amount, Amtrak receives \$2.43 billion, including \$1.14 billion for the Northeast Corridor and \$1.286 billion for the national network. Rail infrastructure grants receive \$175 million, down from \$630 million in 2023. However, these programs received \$8.8 billion in IIJA for 2024.

For airports, the bill provides \$3.19 billion for FAA facilities and equipment, an increase of \$246 million (8%) above FY 2023. It also supplements the authorized \$3.35 billion in Airport Improvement Program funding with \$532 million from the General Fund. That is a \$26 million decrease from last year. Of that amount, \$482 million is congressionally directed to specific airport projects. The IIJA also provided \$3 billion in advanced appropriations for airport infrastructure grants in 2024.

The final agreement funds the RAISE multimodal discretionary grants program at \$345 million, \$455 million below the 2023 level. IIJA provided advanced appropriations of \$1.5 billion for 2024, which was not changed.

Water

For the **Army Corps of Engineers** the bill provides \$8.7 billion, an increase of \$1.3 billion above the President's request, including \$1.8 billion for construction, \$5.6 billion for operation and maintenance (\$422 million above the fiscal year 2023 level), and up to \$440 million for the Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (WIFIA) for dam and levee infrastructure.

For **environmental clean-ups**, the Superfund program takes a hit under EPA's budget, funded at \$538 million, although the reduction compared to FY'23 is largely offset by the restoration of dedicated excise tax revenue to support clean-ups. DOE's Environmental Management program – which is used for nuclear cleanup work at 15 sites across the country -- is funded at \$8.5 billion, an increase of \$219 million above FY'23.

For **water and wastewater**, the bill provides \$2.8 billion for the water and wastewater State Revolving Fund (SRF) programs, which is level funding from FY'23.

