



U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations

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SENATE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE CLEARS FISCAL YEAR 2009 TRANSPORTATION-HUD LEGISLATION Full Committee Mark

Washington, DC... Today, the Senate Appropriations Committee approved Fiscal Year 2009 legislation that makes critical investments in America by strengthening and securing our nation's transportation infrastructure, and providing housing services for those in need, including veterans, the elderly and the disabled.

As Americans struggle to make ends meet due to skyrocketing gas prices, the legislation supports critical investments in public transit and Amtrak. The bill also includes significant funding above President Bush's request for highways, aviation safety, rail safety, airport infrastructure, transit systems, Community Development Block Grants, and the Essential Air Service program. As Americans contend with the ongoing housing crisis, the bill supports expanding homeownership opportunities, increased rental assistance, and neighborhood revitalization through efforts to replace outdated public housing in disrepair with new mixed-income housing.

"This legislation is all about making smart investments that will pay real dividends for the American people in both the short and long-term," said U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd, D-W.Va, Chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee. "Unfortunately, even with the skyrocketing price of gas, and with mass transit being used at record levels, the President has proposed to cut Amtrak by \$525 million. This legislation rejects the President's ill-advised cuts and provides badly needed funds to build and repair mass transit systems and highways and to help Americans find housing. I applaud Chairman Murray and the subcommittee for crafting a bill that reflects the needs of all Americans."

"From the mortgage crisis to record-high gas prices, Americans are facing tremendous challenges when it comes to transportation and housing," said U.S. Senator Patty Murray (D-WA), Chairman of Senate Transportation Appropriations subcommittee. "I'm proud that this bill takes important steps to address those challenges by supporting federal housing agencies, making critical investments in our transportation infrastructure, and ensuring that our roads, bridges, mass transit, and airlines are safe and strong."

Department of Transportation: \$66.8 billion, \$2.1 billion above the FY 2008 enacted level and \$3.3 billion above the President's request.

Federal-Aid Highway Program: \$41.2 billion, \$1.8 billion more than the President's request and the same as the FY2008 level.

- The bill protects our nation's investments in roads and bridges.
- The bill transfers \$8.017 billion from the General Fund to the Highway Trust Fund to ensure adequate resources are available to invest in highway infrastructure in 2009 at the levels assumed in the SAFETEA-LU law. The amount transferred is identical to the amount transferred **out** of the trust fund at the end of 1998.

Federal Aviation Administration: \$15.5 billion, \$590 million above FY 2008, and \$862 million over the President's request.

- **Air traffic controllers** -- The FAA must hire and train almost 17,000 air traffic controllers over the next 10 years. Controllers are retiring in numbers that consistently exceed FAA's projections. As a result, the average experience level of the active controller force is going down rapidly. The bill includes an additional \$34 million in operating funds and \$12 million in procurement funds over and above the budget request to pay for a variety of solutions, including hiring new controllers more rapidly, providing incentives to keep experienced controllers on board, and the accelerating training of new controllers through the use of simulators.
- **Safety oversight** -- The bill includes an additional \$32 million to pay for improvements to FAA oversight of aviation safety in the wake of the Southwest Airlines incidents. Funding will provide for additional safety inspectors and improvements to the FAA's safety reporting system.

Federal Railroad Administration: \$1.816 billion, \$254 million over FY 2008, and \$725 million over the President's request.

- **Amtrak** -- \$1.55 Billion, \$225 million above FY 2008, and \$750 million above the President's request. In an era of record gas prices and congested highways, the committee rejects the Administration's irresponsible cuts, and funds Amtrak at a level that reflects the vital role it plays in our national transportation system. Operating assistance is increased to \$550 million which will keep all Amtrak routes operational and ensure the availability of funds for the retroactive wage payments called for under Amtrak's newly-ratified labor contracts. Capital investment in Amtrak is increased to \$1 billion – the highest single-year appropriation to address Amtrak's aging capital plant and rail cars.
- **Capital Grants for Passenger Rail** -- The bill also provides \$100 million for capital assistance to States to help spawn state-supported passenger rails services and eliminate hindrances to improved or expanded passenger rail service, including Amtrak.

Federal Transit Administration: \$10.225 billion, \$733 million above FY 2008, and \$90 million above the President's request. Transit provides an essential transportation alternative for commuters and families who are facing record gas prices.

- **Formula and Bus Grants** -- \$8.26 billion, \$492 million above FY 2008.
- **New Starts** -- The bill funds the New Starts program at \$1.8 billion. This funding level is \$188 million more than the Administration's request and roughly \$240 million more than the level enacted for fiscal year 2008. The New Starts Program invests in new transit systems and service expansions throughout the country.

Department of Housing and Urban Development: \$42.4 billion, \$4.73 billion over the FY 2008 level and \$3.3 billion over the President's request.

Community Development Block Grants: \$3.889 billion, \$23 million above FY 2008, and \$889 million over the President's request. Investments made in the CDBG program are essential to community development and housing infrastructure in States and communities across the nation.

Public and Indian Housing: \$32.773 billion, \$2.614 billion above FY 2008, and \$2.526 billion above the President's request.

- **Section 8 Tenant-Based Housing** -- Increased by \$500 million above the President's request in order to cover rent increases and ensure that all needy tenants currently receiving assistance can stay within their homes.
- **Native American Housing Block Grant (NAHASDA)** is increased by \$20 million to \$650 million.
- **Homeless Veterans** -- \$10 million is provided for a demonstration project to examine ways to prevent veterans from becoming homeless. The program will be administered by HUD, but will be coordinated with the VA and the Department of Labor. The HUD-VASH program is funded at \$75 million, which will provide new housing vouchers for 10,000 homeless veterans.
- **Hope VI** -- \$100 Million, Equal to FY 2008, and \$100 million above the President's budget request of zero. The Senate again rejected the President's proposal to eliminate the program. The Hope VI program revitalizes neighborhoods by replacing outdated public housing in disrepair with new mixed-income housing.

- **Office of Rural Housing**

- **Economic Development Assistance for Federally-Recognized Indian Tribes** -- The subcommittee recommends \$12 million for a new initiative within the Office of Rural Housing and Economic Development to conduct economic development and capacity building activities for Federally-recognized Indian Tribes. This funding is intended to address the high unemployment and poverty rates through such activities as establishing revolving loan programs, creating affordable housing, and conducting education and training for Tribes.

Related Agencies

Neighborhood Reinvestment Corporation (NeighborWorks)

- **“Rescue scam” prevention outreach campaign** – The bill also includes a \$6 million increase above the President’s request for NeighborWorks to conduct a public education and outreach campaign to quash “rescue scams” – efforts by fly-by-night companies to entice struggling homeowners into phone financial deals in the hope of saving their home. \$2 million is also provided to the Office of Fair Housing within HUD for the investigation and prosecution of such mortgage “rescue scams.”

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