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## LEGISLATIVE Alert

AMERICAN PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION ASSOCIATION



September 8, 2010

### **President Calls for Long Term Transportation Infrastructure Investments – APTA Members Urged to Contact Members of Congress Renewing Call for Multi-Year Surface Transportation Authorization Bill**

In a Labor Day address in Milwaukee, WI, President Barack Obama unveiled a new plan for investing in the nation's transportation infrastructure that would provide immediate, upfront investment in public transportation and high-speed and intercity passenger rail infrastructure, combined with a new long-term framework for the country's surface transportation system through a multi-year surface transportation authorization bill.

The Administration proposes a front-loaded, fully paid for \$50 billion investment in transportation infrastructure to jumpstart the economy and build upon the investments made under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) in order to create jobs and increase economic competitiveness. The \$50 billion would target investments in transit, highways, railroads, and aviation. Further details on funding by mode as well as how the \$50 billion would be offset are not yet available.

In the fact sheet that provides a broad outline of the proposal, the Administration cites that many parts of transit systems need significant funding to return to a state of good repair. It states that the plan "would help address this by making a major new investment in the nation's bus and rail system." It makes clear that the Administration is "committed to expanding public transit systems and would dedicate significant new funding to the "New Starts" program." In a conference call with APTA President Bill Millar and other transportation association leaders, U.S. Department of Transportation officials stated that the President's announcement is not intended as a second stimulus package, but rather a commitment to moving forward on a long term bill that would immediately create and sustain jobs with predictable funding. Those officials did not, however, provide details on funding, but rather said that the President was committed to working with Congress in a bipartisan manner to establish a specific funding mechanism. They stated that the plan was not detailed by design because they wanted flexibility as they work with Congress to develop a long term authorizing bill.

In the longer term, the proposal generally calls for policy reforms to streamline surface transportation investments by consolidating programs and utilizing performance measures and incentives. The plan also calls for the creation of a national infrastructure bank to leverage private, state, and local capital to invest in projects of regional and national significance that are not well served under current funding structures. The infrastructure bank would take a competitive approach and evaluate projects against one another to determine which would produce the greatest taxpayer benefit.

The Administration also calls for making high-speed rail investments a permanent component of the surface transportation system to guarantee a long-term commitment to the creation of a national high-speed rail network and commits to "invest in a long-overdue overhaul of Amtrak's fleet."

The House and Senate return from the August district work period next Monday, September 13, with a targeted adjournment date during the first full week of October, leaving little time for lawmakers to shepherd a bill to the President's desk. It is also unclear whether the \$50 billion initiative will move separately from a multi-year authorization bill. Despite the unknowns, APTA members are urged to contact their representatives in Congress to express strong support for a long term surface transportation authorizing bill that increases public transportation investment and helps restore transit systems to a state of good repair, construct much needed new infrastructure, and advance environmental sustainability, while creating jobs and enhancing the nation's economic competitiveness.

#### **Action Call for APTA Members:**

Contact your members of Congress to urge the following:

- Tell your Senators and Representatives that transit investment supports and creates jobs. Earlier this year, APTA identified \$15 billion of "ready to go" transit projects which would support or create more than 450,000 jobs according

to economic research on transit investment.

- Identify projects in your district or state that could be paid for through the Administration's initiative.
- Remind them that for every \$1 invested in public transportation, \$4 in economic returns is generated.



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