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LEGISLATIVE Alert

AMERICAN PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION ASSOCIATION



March 14, 2012

U.S. Senate Approves Surface Transportation Authorization Bill with Strong Bipartisan Vote

This afternoon, the United States Senate passed S.1813, the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP-21) - the Senate's two-year, \$109 billion surface transportation authorization by a [vote of 74 – 22](#). Over the past few days, APTA members present at this year's legislative conference discussed the legislation and pending amendments, including an expected manager's amendment.

The [text of the manager's amendment](#) was finalized late last night. However, while most of the language does not greatly alter the bill there were a few components of the manager's amendment of which APTA members need to be aware:

- The amendment includes a change to the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) definition under the capital investment grants (New Starts/Small Starts) program. This change includes eligibility for BRT projects that have a "substantial" portion of operations within a dedicated right-of-way during peak hours, so long as the right-of-way is semi-dedicated for transit usage and physical elements are in place that reduce vehicle travel time and increase reliability. The new definition applies to future projects, and according to the committee staff, the change does not affect formulas;
- It provides for a new bus discretionary program, authorizing \$75 million in general funds to serve as another source of assistance for bus capital needs beyond the new formula funds the bill makes available;
- The amendment adjusts language providing small bus system operators in urbanized areas with flexibility to use 5307 formula funds for operating assistance in a tiered system, with systems operating under 75 buses able to use up to 75 percent of their capital assistance towards operating costs, and operators of 76-100 buses able to use up to 50 percent.

As APTA expressed in letters to the [Senate](#) and [House](#) earlier this week, we are eager to see both chambers move forward on surface transportation authorization bills. The strong bipartisan vote in favor of passage of the Senate bill provides continued momentum behind efforts to see a bill enacted this year.

Action in the House awaits decisions by the House Leadership on the direction they choose to proceed – whether they will continue to proceed with their five-year proposal, or revert to a shorter term bill, more closely patterned after the Senate bill. The House returns to Washington next week and APTA will continue to monitor that situation as it develops.

Action Alert

APTA Members should contact their [U.S. Senators who voted for S.1813](#), the MAP-21 legislation and thank them for advancing the surface transportation authorization bill and for their support for investment in public transportation.

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