

LEGISLATIVE ISSUE BRIEF

March 2018

FISCAL YEAR (FY) 2018 APPROPRIATIONS

Congress must approve appropriations bills every year to fund government programs authorized by legislation such as the Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act. Congress must set an annual obligation limit for authorized spending from the Highway Trust Fund (HTF) and appropriate general funds non-trust funded programs. APTA urges Congress to fully appropriate funds at authorized levels for transit and passenger rail accounts to spur economic growth and meet 21st century mobility needs.

Since FY18 began in October of 2017, Congress has passed five continuing funding resolutions (CR) to keep the federal government operating at FY17 levels, allowed a brief lapse in funding, and passed a bipartisan budget deal to raise the discretionary spending caps. The current CR expires March 23, by which point Congress hopes to pass full-year appropriations. The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) has not made partial-year apportionments of formula grants yet, but if and when they do, the prorated amounts will be based on FY17 levels rather than the higher FY18 levels. FTA cannot allocate discretionary grants, including Capital Investment Grants (CIG), absent full-year appropriations.

Congress must finish its work on a full-year FY18 transportation appropriations bill, otherwise federal transit programs funded by the HTF will not receive the full funding authorized by the FAST Act. Also, a full-year bill is needed in order to include language similar to what was in the House-passed and Senate Committee-passed bills directing FTA to administer the program as intended. It is critical that FTA continue to support projects as they move through the pipeline, recommend vetted and ready-to-go projects for funding, and sign full funding grant agreements when money is appropriated and qualified projects request one.

The FY18 appropriations bill should utilize the new budget caps to fund HTF-supported programs at or above the authorized levels. Appropriators should also consider increasing funding for General Fund programs, such as CIG, Innovation and Technical Assistance and Workforce Development programs, and passenger rail programs including Amtrak, Consolidated Rail Infrastructure, and others. It is also important that language be included to allow commuter railroads to compete for CRISI grants to help with positive train control (PTC) implementation and rail grade crossing improvements.

APTA Position

- **Congress must complete a FY18 transportation appropriations bill prior to the expiration of the current CR and take advantage of increased budget caps, by providing additional funding public transportation and rail programs in FY18 & FY19 appropriations.**
- **APTA strongly supports including directive language to ensure vetted and ready-to-go CIG projects receive grant agreements, and commuter railroads are able to compete for CRISI grants to help implement PTC.**