

February 2018 Monthly Washington, D.C. Report



To: Steve Heminger, Executive Director

From: Tom Bulger, President GRI

Date: March 1, 2018

RE: Monthly Report for February 2018

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Washington March 2018 Meetings

The bulk of this past month's efforts were to schedule meetings for March 12 to March 14th. Thus far, dozens of meetings have been arranged with Members of Congress, Congressional Staff, Key Committees, the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and numerous partner organizations.

Meeting scheduling continues as we approach the dates the Commission and staff will be in Washington, DC. It should be noted that the Congress will be returning to Washington, D.C. on the afternoon of Tuesday, March 13th.

Annual Congressional Transportation Reception

During February 2018, we have been working closely with MTC Staff Rebecca Long, our Southern California partners as well as our Public Relations contractor to promote our annual reception on March 13th at 5:50 PM in the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee Room, 2167 Rayburn House Office Building.

President's Infrastructure Proposal

It has been two weeks since the Trump Administration released their infrastructure proposal. The debate has centered on how their ideas will mechanically work and which components could become law. The Administration has put forward a broad set of ideas. However, I expected much more. The Administration touted large funding amounts while proposing very little federal funding and proposing cuts to FTA and AMTRAK.

President' Budget

The President's Budget was submitted on February 12, 2018. The United States Department of Transportation FY 2019 request is \$77.3 billion, which is a reduction of \$1.7 billion or 2.2 percent from the average of the House and Senate, not yet finished, FY 2018 appropriations bills. The President's budget does not include the \$200 billion as contained in the Administration's Infrastructure plan.

Key elements of the FY 2019 budget include:

- No fix to the Highway Trust Fund which is estimated to run out of money in FY 2021.
- Fully funds the Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act highway Trust Fund obligations for FY 2019.
- Eliminate future FTA future full funding agreements but honor existing agreements and defund the Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery program.

Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works (EPW) Hearing on Administration's Infrastructure Plan

On March 1st, the EPW Committee held a hearing on the Administration's Infrastructure Plan. The Secretary of Transportation Elaine Chao was the primary witness. Senators from both sides the aisle expressed their desire to enact infrastructure legislation. Secretary Chao repeatedly stated that the Administration wants to accomplish an infrastructure initiative on a bipartisan process. Most of the hearing centered on how the plan's proposed incentive program would work, specifically a proposed "look back" provision for rewarding new state, regional and local funding. In addition, Senators spent the bulk of their time discussing important and expensive projects in their respective states.

Coming and Going

On February 12th, President Trump nominated Thelma Drake to lead the FTA. She is a former Congresswoman and Virginia State Delegate from the Tidewater region of Virginia. She is the Assistant Director of Transportation for Norfolk, Virginia.

The Senate confirmation process has not been scheduled.

Meetings

On-going meetings with our public relations contractor, caterer, etc. concerning the Annual Transportation Congressional Reception.