

**Metropolitan Transportation Commission and Association of Bay Area Governments
Joint MTC Legislation Committee and ABAG Legislation Committee**

September 13, 2019

Agenda Item 6b

Tom Bulger's Report

Subject: July and August 2019 Report from Washington, D.C. advocate.

Recommendation: Information

Attachments: Attachment A: Tom Bulger's Report – July and August 2019


Alix A. Bockelman

July and August 2019 Monthly Washington, D.C. Report



To: Therese W. McMillian, Executive Director

From: Tom Bulger, President GRI

Date: August 27, 2019

RE: Monthly Report for July and August 2019

- Bay Bridge Study Congressional Briefing
- Bipartisan Budget Deal Agreement
- House Hearing on the Transit New Start Program
- United States Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works (EP&W) Committee Approves a Five-Year Highway Bill

Bay Bridge Study Congressional Briefing

On August 19, 2019, we arranged a Bay Bridge Congressional staff briefing via a conference call. Specifically, with Senator Feinstein and Congressman DeSaulnier's Washington, D.C. staff and the MTC legislative and planning staff. The briefing covered the planning process and the evaluations of proposed crossings as well as preliminary findings. The briefing concluded with a lengthy discussion and next steps.

Bipartisan Budget Deal Agreement

Congress and the President agreed to a two-year Appropriations and Debt Limit deal at the end of July. The arrangement would suspend the limit on the nation's debt ceiling for two more years and increase appropriations by \$320 billion over two years by increasing the budget caps for defense and non-defense spending.

House Hearing on the New Start Program

In July, I attended the House Subcommittee on Highways and Transit hearing about the Federal Transit Administration Capital Investment Grant (CIG) program. The hearing focused on the following:

- Delays in signing grant agreements.
- Delays in allocating appropriated funding.
- Delays in issuing Letters of No Prejudice.
- Delays for moving projects from Project Development to Engineering.
- Decreases in federal costs.
- Defining the non-federal share by excluding Transportation Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act loans.
- Transparency through a Program Pipeline Dashboard.

United States Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works (EPW) Committee Approves a Five-Year Highway Bill

At the very end of July, the Senate EPW Committee completed a five-year highway markup. The bill is called America's Transportation Infrastructure Act S.2302.

Overall, the measure authorizes \$287 billion over five years from the Highway Trust Fund. All of the current federal highway core programs are increased and therefore retained. The bill includes a new climate change subtitle with funding for resiliency, carbon reduction, congestion relief and alternative charging infrastructure.

The MTC staff has done a wonderful write up of the bill that I'm sure will be provided to the Committee.