



U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations

PRESS RELEASE

Summary: FY 2012 Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies Appropriations Bill

Subcommittee Mark

For Immediate Release: September 20, 2011

	Budget Authority Only	Total Resources
FY 2011 Enacted:	\$55.4 billion	\$109.6 billion
Subcommittee Mark	\$55.3 billion	\$109.5 billion

Washington, DC - Overall, the fiscal year 2012 Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies Appropriations bill includes budget authority of \$55.3 billion, \$100 million less than the 2011 enacted level. Total funding, including limitations on obligations related to programs funded by the Highway Trust Fund, is \$109.5 billion. The total funding level is \$100 million or 0.1 percent below the equivalent 2011 enacted level.

“As we put together the legislation that funds critical pieces of our federal government, we must do everything we can to cut spending in a responsible way—but we must also make sure we are investing in our future and protecting the most vulnerable among us. And working together, I believe we have accomplished that with the legislation before us here today. It preserves housing assistance for low-income families and veterans, and it continues investments in our nation’s roads, bridges, transit systems and airports.” – Senator Patty Murray, (D-Wash.), Chairman

The bill helps our communities and transportation system by focusing on five priority areas:

- Investing in transportation infrastructure;
- Providing housing and services to our Nation’s most vulnerable;
- Supporting our communities and addressing the foreclosure crisis;
- Ensuring the safety of our transportation system; and
- Promoting sustainability in our communities.

Investing in transportation infrastructure

Funding for Significant Transportation Projects (“TIGER” program): \$550 million for grants to support significant transportation projects in a wide variety of modes, including highways and bridges, public transportation, passenger and freight railroads, and port infrastructure. The bill requires the Secretary to allocate no less than \$120 million for projects in rural communities. The funding level included in the bill is \$23 million higher than the fiscal year 2011 enacted level.

Highway Investments: \$41.1 billion for the Federal-aid Highway program to support essential investments in roads and bridges in every State across the country. This funding level is equal to the fiscal year 2011 enacted level. The bill does not include any rescission of budgetary resources from the highway program. The appropriations act for fiscal year 2011 included \$3.1 billion in rescissions of unused highway resources provided in previous years.

Transit Investments: An additional \$358 million above the fiscal year 2011 enacted level for the transit “New Starts” program. This funding supports projects across the Nation that will provide new or expanded public transportation services.

Airport Investments: \$3.5 billion for capital investments at airports across the country.

Providing housing and services to our Nation’s most vulnerable

Section 8 Tenant-based rental assistance: \$18.9 billion for housing choice vouchers. This level of funding is \$501 million above the fiscal year 2011 enacted level. This funding is critical to ensuring that our Nation’s low-income families, especially those hit hard by the recession, can maintain safe, affordable housing. It includes:

- \$17.14 billion for the renewal of current housing choice vouchers and \$1.4 billion for program administration;
- \$75 million for 11,000 new HUD-Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) vouchers for homeless veterans;
- \$60 million for the Family Self-Sufficiency program; and
- \$5 million to support a homeless demonstration program.

Public Housing: \$1.9 billion for the public housing capital fund, a decrease of \$165 million below the fiscal year 2011 enacted level. This funding will help preserve and improve public housing. The bill also includes \$4 billion for the public housing operating fund, which is \$655 million below the fiscal year 2011 enacted level. The language allows the Secretary to offset PHA’s excess reserves, but limits the allowable offset to \$750 million.

Project-based rental assistance: \$9.4 billion for the project-based section 8 program, including over \$9.1 billion for the renewal of all expiring project-based contracts for a full 12 months. This level of funding is \$161 million above the fiscal year 2011 enacted level.

Homeless Assistance grants: \$1.9 billion for homeless assistance grants. This level of funding is equal to the fiscal year 2011 enacted level. In response to the increase in family homelessness, the bill includes \$286 million for the Emergency Solutions Grant program to prevent families from becoming homeless, or rapidly re-house those that are homeless.

Native American housing block grants: \$650 million for Native American housing block grants. This level of funding will support the housing and community development needs of Native Americans.

Supporting our communities and addressing the foreclosure crisis

Community Development Block Grants (CDBG): \$2.85 billion is provided for CDBG grant funding for States and communities across the Nation. This is \$485 million below the fiscal year 2011 enacted level. This funding will assist states and communities that are still struggling as the economy recovers with their continued efforts to invest in and support the needs of low-income communities.

HOME Investment Partnership: \$1 billion for the HOME Investment Partnership program, which is \$607 million less than the fiscal year 2011 enacted level. This funding supports the creation and rehabilitation of low-income housing across the country. The bill also includes reforms to ensure that funds are used in a timely fashion for worthy projects.

Housing Counseling: A total of \$125 million for housing counseling efforts. This includes \$60 million for HUD's housing counseling activities, including Home Equity Conversion Mortgage (HECM) counseling and pre-purchase counseling. In addition, \$65 million is included to continue the National Foreclosure Mitigation Counseling program that began in fiscal year 2008.

Ensuring the safety of our transportation system

Automobile Safety: \$800 million for vehicle and driver safety programs, which will support research into the causes of sudden unintended acceleration and identify ways to improve vehicle crash worthiness. The bill also provides funds for performance and incentive grants to States that enact distracted driver laws.

Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety: Includes \$81 million to support pipeline safety inspections and administer special permits and approvals for the transportation of hazardous materials. This funding will improve the agency's ability to ensure the safety of the interstate pipeline infrastructure and the transportation of hazardous materials across the Nation.

Aviation Safety: \$8 million is provided to hire an additional 71 aviation safety inspectors.

Transit Safety: \$150 million is provided for grants to the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) for capital investments. The bill includes language requiring WMATA to place the highest priority on projects that will improve the safety of the transit system.

Promoting sustainable communities

Sustainable Communities Initiative: \$90 million within HUD's Community Development Fund to promote integrated housing and transportation planning. Joining HUD in this initiative will be the Department of Transportation and the Environmental Protection Agency. The funding included in the bill will provide grants for integrated housing and transportation planning efforts on both the regional and local level.

Choice Neighborhoods: \$120 million for HUD's Choice Neighborhoods Initiative. This initiative will expand the successful HOPE VI program. Last year, \$65 million was included for Choice Neighborhoods as a set-aside within HOPE VI. While continuing to focus on improving public housing, it also will address the needs of other HUD-assisted housing. In addition to improving housing and revitalizing poor communities, it also promotes better access to schools, transportation, jobs and other services.

Transit Energy Efficiency Grants: \$25 million for grants to help transit agencies make cutting-edge and innovative capital investments that will reduce the energy consumption or greenhouse gas emissions of their operations.

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Senate Amendment Saves High Speed Rail — Sort Of

By [Andrea Bernstein](#) | September 21, 2011 – 5:33 pm

High speed rail got a last minute reprieve today, with a vote by a Senate committee to restore \$100 million in spending on the program, a day after a subcommittee had zeroed out funding for bullet train projects.

But even with the Senate vote, future funding of America's high speed rail program remains in doubt as Congress shaves all government spending closer and closer to the bone.

It is a precipitous decline in fortunes for the high speed rail program, once a signature initiative of President Barack Obama. As recently as January — just eight months ago — the President expressed his intention to connect 80 percent of Americans to high speed rail by 2036.

Beginning in 2008, under the Passenger Rail Investment Act, or PRIA, Congress spent about \$2 billion a year on the high speed rail program. But last year, Congress stopped appropriating money for high speed rail. It looked like a repeat was in the works this year after both the House of Representatives and a Senate Subcommittee, which appropriates the US DOT's budget, voted to spend nothing on the program in the fiscal year beginning October 1.

The spending at issue doesn't include \$8 billion in grants from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, aka the stimulus bill.

The amendment to restore \$100 million in funding, sponsored by Senators Richard Durbin (D-IL), Frank Lautenberg (D-NJ), Mary Landrieu, (D-LA) and Dianne Feinstein (D-CA), passed by voice vote Wednesday.

"This is a rail-unfriendly congress," said Petra Todorovich, of America 2050. "Inserting \$100 million, that's just a gesture to keep the program alive — which is good."

And Senator Frank Lautenberg, who had expressed pessimism after Tuesday's subcommittee vote, put a happy face on the full Senate's committee's voice vote to restore funding. "These high speed rail grants will help the United States create a 21st century transportation system," Lautenberg said in a statement. "We must make smart investments to expand high-speed rail in New Jersey and throughout the nation."

But Kerry O'Hare, Policy Director of the group Building America's Future, was less sanguine. "In my opinion, this could mean the end of the program." She added, "it's just the slow chipping away of funding."

President Barack Obama also inserted \$4 billion for high speed rail into the American Jobs Act. He's been stumping in swing counties for the bill, but there's no evidence yet

Congress will pass the legislation, and in fact, it seems inclined to keep cutting away at programs like U.S. high speed rail.

Several governors, including the governors of Florida, Wisconsin, and Ohio, sent back their high speed rail-related stimulus grants, causing the U.S. DOT to redistribute much of that money to other projects, including a Northeast corridor high-speed rail project.

The stimulus money already in the pipeline will still be spent.

The full senate now votes on transportation spending for 2012, including high speed rail. After that, it goes to a conference committee, where it could still be eliminated entirely.

Senate committee preserves transportation funding, restores high-speed rail money

September 21, 2011

By Stephen Lee Davis

Senate appropriators approved their draft bill setting spending levels for housing and transportation departments for 2012, preserving competitive intermodal programs and approving an amendment to restore a small amount of high-speed rail funding

A day after a markup in subcommittee that preserved TIGER and Amtrak funding but cut high-speed rail entirely, the Senate Appropriations Committee approved its 2012 Transportation-HUD spending bill Wednesday. An amendment offered by Senators Durbin, Lautenberg, Feinstein and Landrieu to provide \$100 million for high speed and intercity passenger rail passed by voice vote in committee, meaning votes weren't recorded.

Contrasted with the House's 2012 bill, the Senate version doesn't make the same drastic cuts from current funding levels for transportation and preserves important programs like TIGER that foster competition and use performance and bang for the buck as yardsticks to decide which projects to fund.

"The Senate is to be commended for preserving the current levels of investment in transportation," said T4 America director James Corless. "With thousands of Americans out of work, now is not the time to cut spending on transportation and add to the unemployment rolls. Competitive programs like TIGER have been instrumental in starting to move toward a more performance-based system that takes a range of factors into account when deciding what projects to fund. The Senate also protected the vital New Starts funding to help expand urgently needed public transportation systems across the country, as well as funding for Amtrak and passenger rail."

"While \$100 million is far less than recent yearly spending on high-speed rail, the vote by Senate appropriators today to restore funding for high speed rail is a statement that this program is important to the country's future and should continue to be funded," continued Corless. "This modest investment will help continue states' momentum in building and planning their passenger rail networks; networks that are important to giving Americans other options for traveling within and through regions."

The House and Senate are likely to pass a "continuing resolution" in the coming weeks to continue funding the government for another few months, meaning that at some point the House and Senate will have to come together to reconcile their very two different versions of this bill.