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Sen. Boxer: Working With Mica, Inhofe on a Long-Term Transpo Bill

by [Tanya Snyder](#) on January 6, 2011

Senator Barbara Boxer told reporters today that she had an “excellent”, “wonderful” meeting with Rep. John Mica (R-FL), the new chair of the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure. She confirmed that they’re working on a “longer-term” transportation bill and have come up with many points of agreement. We’ll let you know more details about that meeting as we get them.



Photo from [Barbara Boxer's flickr page](#)

But she also said that the future of any transportation bill is in jeopardy now that the House has passed a new rule allowing money to languish in the highway trust fund instead of being spent on urgent infrastructure projects. The Republicans want to keep that money in the bank in the name of deficit reduction.

Boxer made it clear that if there’s no mandate to spend the money in the highway trust fund, “there is no highway trust fund.” She called the fund “sacrosanct” and made it clear that the new rule makes it far more difficult to craft a serious transportation bill, since financing will no longer be guaranteed. “If the Republicans plan to raid this fund,” she said, “then all of our plans to do more, to do it right, to do it better – even to do as much as we’ve done before – are thrown aside.”

She said the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee will be holding its first hearing on the transportation bill January 26. The hearing isn’t on the committee’s

website yet, but it's on our calendar now. She reaffirmed that she and Senator James Inhofe, the top Republican on her committee, see eye to eye on infrastructure (though they don't quite agree on climate science). "I'm hopeful we'll be able to be a unified force," she said.

She called the press conference to affirm that the EPW Committee, which she chairs, will continue working to protect the environment – specifically, against attacks on environmental regulation. She railed against Rep. Fred Upton's recent statement, "We are not going to let this administration regulate what they've been unable to legislate," referring to the EPA's regulation of greenhouse gases as any other pollutant.

Boxer made it clear that not only does clean air legislation require such regulation, the Supreme Court has mandated it. Even the auto industry supports it: Boxer pointed out that the Alliance of Automobile Manufacturers favors EPA regulation of carbon and raising fuel economy standards.

As for a climate bill, Boxer said one would surface when it has the votes. Even with a stronger Democratic majority in the Senate, they could never muster more than 54 votes for it – not enough to overcome a filibuster.

So does that mean Sen. Boxer is in favor of the new proposal to reform the filibuster rule so that not every piece of important legislation stalls without a 60-vote super-majority? She does indeed. Expect to see her listed as a co-sponsor soon.