



Federal Update

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Virginia-North Carolina Interstate
High Speed Rail Compact Meeting

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FAST Act: Background

- The FAST Act, the most recent multi-year surface transportation reauthorization, was enacted on December 4, 2015.
- For the first time, Amtrak's reauthorization was included within the larger surface transportation bill.
- Various reforms to Amtrak and intercity passenger rail were included, and new grant programs were authorized from FY16 – FY20.
- However, Amtrak and intercity passenger rail grants did NOT receive contract authority via the Trust Fund. Therefore, rail is still dependent on annual discretionary appropriations.

FAST Act: Summary of Rail Title

- The old “Operating” and “Capital” grants to Amtrak were repealed and instead new Grants to Amtrak for the Northeast Corridor (NEC) and for the National Network (NN) were authorized.
- Mandates new financial reporting and 5 year planning requirements.
- Various pilots and reports were authorized, including leveraging Amtrak’s right-of-way, station development, boarding procedures.
- Three new FRA competitive grant programs were authorized:
 - Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements (CRISI),
 - Federal-State Partnership for State of Good Repair, and
 - Restoration and Enhancement Grants.

FY2017 Appropriations

- The FY17 Omnibus was signed into law on May 5, 2017.
- The bill included \$1.495 billion for Amtrak:
 - This is a \$105 million increase over FY16.
 - And nearly the funding level authorized by the FAST Act (\$1.5b for FY17).
 - Of the \$1.495b for Amtrak, \$328m is for the NEC and \$1.167b is for the NN.
- Given the reality of budget constraints, this funding level demonstrates the congressional support for Amtrak. This is especially true given the Administration's budget proposal for FY17, which proposed significant reductions to Amtrak's budget.

FY2018 Appropriations

- The House passed its bill on September 14th.
 - \$1.42b for Amtrak
 - In addition to Grants to Amtrak, \$900m is also potentially available for major infrastructure projects, such as the Gateway program
- The Senate bill has passed out of the Appropriations Committee, but has not been considered on the floor by the full Senate yet.
 - \$1.6b for Amtrak
- Congress failed to conference and pass a final FY18 appropriations bill by the October 1st deadline. In order to avoid a government shutdown, Congress passed a Continuing Resolution (CR) until December 8th, which will provide additional time to conference and pass a final FY18 bill. However, another CR may be necessary...

FRA FAST Act Grants

- As mentioned, three new FRA competitive grant programs were authorized by the FAST Act and Congress appropriated funds for these grants for the first time in FY17.
 - \$25 million for Federal State Partnership SOGR grants
 - \$68 million for CRISI grants
 - \$5 million for the Restoration and Enhancement grants
- The rumor is that the NOFOs are expected very soon. Once these notices are available, Amtrak will review and work w/ our partners to identify projects that are appropriate, but we will not know for sure until we review how these new grant programs will be administered by USDOT.

Infrastructure Bill

- It is still not clear what the Administration will propose for an “Infrastructure Bill”, nor how Congress will respond with legislation.
 - Will it be paid for? If so, how? What are the offsets?
 - The size and scope - How large will it be; for example, we’ve all heard \$200 billion of federal funds to support \$1 billion in total spending...
 - Will there be a rail title? What FRA grant programs will be included?
 - The role of P3s and other innovative financing...
 - Streamlining and regulatory relief...
- Amtrak remains ready to work with Congress and the Administration to help target funds to the most critical projects across the national rail network.

