

News!

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HOUSE PASSES FY10 TRANSPORTATION BILL

On Thursday the House passed a FY10 transportation bill by a vote of 256-168, which provides roughly \$46 billion for the Transportation Department, more than \$8 billion above FY09 levels. From that total, \$4 billion is provided for a high-speed and intercity passenger rail. The funding is four times the total President Obama had sought. The economic stimulus also included \$8 billion to jump start a high-speed rail network.

The spending bill also includes \$10.5 billion for the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), slightly more than the president's request and \$352 million above this year's budget. The FTA funding includes \$8.3 billion for transit formula grants for ongoing capital and operating needs of transit systems, including funding for new buses, stations and intermodal facilities.



SENATE NPS HEARING INCLUDES LIGHTHOUSE PRESERVATION BILL

On Tuesday the Senate Energy and Natural Resources subcommittee on National Parks received testimony on several park and preservation related bills. Testifying on behalf of the Department of Interior was Acting NPS Director, Dan Wenk and Forest Service Deputy Chief, Joel Holtrop. Below are brief summaries of the bills and NPS's position:

S.715 – would establish a pilot program for the preservation of historic lighthouses. The Administration said it needed more time to develop an official position. Concerns were raised by ranking member Senator Burr (R-NC) that the language

conflicts with the National Lighthouse Preservation Act and that other streams of funding exist for lighthouse restoration.

S.1270 – would expand the Oregon Caves National Monument to include more than 4,000 acres of the Rogue-Siskiyou National Forest, transferring management responsibility for the land from the FS to the NPS. Wenk and Holtrop said the two agencies needed another six months to discuss a joint plan with the hopes of avoiding legislation. Senator Ron Wyden (D-OR) blasted the agencies for their inaction over the past year and stated "All I see is foot-dragging and it's not acceptable."

S.635 – would declare Illabot Creek in northwestern Washington as a "wild and scenic" waterway, adding additional protections against development along the river. The Administration supports this bill.

H.R.2430 – would direct the agency to lift a ban, implemented on July 1, on stocking non-native fish in the North Cascades National Park and surrounding lakes. The NPS supports the bill with amended language that would ensure it more closely complies with its 10-year analysis of the species' environmental impacts.

S.2330 – would direct the Secretary of Interior to study the feasibility of declaring Camp Hale in Colorado as a national park unit. The Administration supports this legislation.

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S.742 – would expand the boundary of the Jimmy Carter National Historic Site and designate it as a National Historical Park. The Administration supports this legislation.



HOUSE HEARING ON FEDERAL GEOSPATIAL MAPPING PROGRAM

Yesterday the House Energy and Mineral Resources held an oversight hearing on “Federal Geospatial Data Management” as well as a legislative hearing on H.R. 2489 which would authorize the AmericaView Geospatial Imagery Mapping program. Panel witnesses testified that federal agencies are wasting taxpayer dollars on costly surveys for data that could be more affordably obtained by the private sector or from other government offices.

Subcommittee ranking member, Doug Lamborn (R-CO) criticized the White House office of Management and Budget for not responding to the invitation to testify which he believes raises questions over how the money for the program and stimulus money for mapping is being spent.

Chairman of the committee, Jim Costa (D-CA) said “One hand of the government doesn’t necessarily know what the other hand of the government is doing.” Costa and other witnesses also criticized the Federal Geographic Data Committee – a multiagency task force led by Interior – for failing to meet a Clinton executive order to develop the National Spatial Data Infrastructure (NSDI). The NSDI initiative aims to simplify data sharing across all levels of government and the private sector in order to prevent redundancy and save money.

Questions were also raised as to whether the Department of Interior was the right agency to house such an initiative. The National States Geographic Information Council, which represents state geographic managers and coordinators, has suggested the creation of a Federal Geographic Information Officer position within OMB, and has said many states and local agencies are being improperly excluded from the committee’s decision making.

Hearing witnesses included: Karen Siderelis, Geospatial Information Officer for the DOI; Michael Byrne, Geospatial Information Officer for the State of CA; John Palatiello, executive director for Management Association for Private Photogrammetric Surveyors (MAPPS); Susan Marlow, chief executive officer, Smart Data Strategies, Inc.



MARK YOUR CALENDARS

- October 13-17, 2009 – National Preservation Conference, Nashville, TN
- October 14-15, 2009 – NCSHPO Winter Board Meeting, Nashville, TN