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Transportation Conference Committee Continues to Work toward Bill

While Transportation Conference Committee staff from the House and Senate continued to meet this week, a coalition of transportation organizations pushed for a swift resolution to the process.

The American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials, along with 19 other organizations, signed a letter (bit.ly/confereeleter) that was sent to House and Senate conferees calling for a quick passage of a conference report, so that the president can sign a new transportation bill before the current extension expires June 30, 2012.

Calling this a "historic moment," the letter said that, "failure to enact this legislation will be devastating to America's workers, jobs, businesses, and the economy." It went on to say, "The nation's economy is at a critical stage, and this surface transportation legislation can be a major factor in ensuring that we will strengthen our overall position in the world economy."

AASHTO Executive Director John Horsley sent a letter (bit.ly/HorsleyLetter) last week to Sen. Barbara Boxer (D-California) in which he urged a bill be passed that gives greater flexibility to state and local governments in transportation projects, a greater focus on performance-based management, a more streamlined and efficient process for project delivery in order to complete projects faster, and the ability to leverage resources with creative financial tools to supplement funding.

A third letter (bit.ly/TRIPletter) was sent Monday to Sen. Boxer, Sen. Max Baucus (D-Montana), Rep. John Mica (R-Florida), Rep. Dave Camp (R-Michigan), and all other transportation committee conferees in which AASHTO and other transportation industry groups encouraged the inclusion of the Transportation and Regional Infrastructure Projects (TRIP) pilot bonding program into any upcoming surface transportation legislation.

The current extension is set to expire on June 30, leaving only three weeks in which both the House and Senate are in session simultaneously. Conferees of both the House and Senate have expressed optimism that a bill could be produced before the extension expires next month.

Questions regarding this article may be directed to editor@ashtojournal.org.