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The Highwayman

Transportation in Houston with Dug Begley

Transportation bill considered by Congress again bans Metro rail funding

Posted on June 7, 2014 | By Dug Begley

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When Congress takes up transportation funding for the next federal fiscal year, they'll also be delving into a long-running debate over a proposed rail line in Houston.



Rep. John Culberson, R-Houston.

Just as he [did last year](#), [Rep. John Culberson, R-Houston](#), inserted language [about Houston rail](#) into the

Transportation, Housing and Urban Development appropriations bill. The fiscal year spending plan, aka the THUD bill (my favorite bill of the year because of the acronym) dictates how much money federal agencies like the U.S. Department of Transportation have to dole out.

In language identical to a passage in last year's bill, Sec. 165 of the THUD bill "bars the use of funds to advance in any way a new light or heavy rail project towards a full funding agreement for the

Metropolitan Transit Authority of Harris County, Texas, if the proposed capital project is constructed on (or planned to be constructed on) Richmond Avenue west of South Shepherd Drive or on Post Oak Boulevard north of Richmond Avenue in Houston, Texas," according to the [bill's summary page](#).

Last year, the [clause touched off a healthy back-and-forth](#) between Culberson, who represents the area west of Shepherd, and fellow Republican Rep. Ted Poe of Humble, whose district includes Richmond east of Shepherd.

While Culberson maintains a vast majority of people in his district do not want the rail line, Poe polled residents near Richmond on his side of Shepherd and found most supported the plan to extend rail service along Richmond, toward the Loop 610 interchange with U.S. 59 southwest of downtown Houston.

Culberson has also argued that the [rail plan for Richmond is not affordable](#).

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Barring the money in the past year had no effect, positive or negative, on Metro's proposed University Line. The transit system has been busy building two other rail lines and never sought money for any rail along Richmond.

At some point, however, Metro might move forward with a Richmond plan, and officials have said seeking federal dollars will likely be a part of that plan.

The House is expected to discuss and vote on the THUD appropriations bill Monday.

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