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House Passes Continuing Resolution to Keep Federal Programs Funded

By a vote of 372-56, the House of Representatives today passed a continuing resolution (CR) to provide partial funds for Fiscal Year 2009 for those federal programs for which a free standing appropriations bill had not been passed, including the Department of Transportation. Fiscal Year 2009 begins on October 1, 2008 and the CR provides funds from then through March 6, 2009. Under the terms of the CR, programs will be funded at their FY 2008 level. For the Federal-aid highway program the FY 2008 funding level is \$41.216 billion which included \$1 billion above the SAFETEA-LU authorized level for a bridge repair initiative. It is anticipated that the additional \$1 billion will not be included in this CR's partial funding and therefore the highway program will receive a prorated share of \$40.2 billion through March 6. SAFETEA-LU authorizes \$41.2 billion for the highway program in FY 2009. When the new Congress takes over in January it will be necessary to pass an additional appropriations measure to fund government programs for the remainder of the fiscal year and at that time could restore the full SAFTEA-LU funding. The transit program receives a prorated share of \$9.4 billion. The Highway Trust Fund fix, which was enacted on September 15, ensures that the revenue is available to fund these appropriated levels for the highway and transit programs. Congress is scheduled to adjourn by the end of the week and passage of a CR is necessary to keep government agencies running. The Senate is expected to pass the CR as soon as it is sent over from the House.

House Considering Infrastructure Funding in Stimulus Package

House Democrats are advocating for a second economic stimulus bill and infrastructure funding, including highway funding, is being discussed. AGC has sent a letter to the House pointing out the job creation benefits that results from infrastructure funding and pointing out that rising construction material prices and inadequate state budgets have resulted in fewer public works projects going out for bid. In the case of highway projects, AGC pointed out that state DOTs have responded to an AASHTO survey indicating that over 3000 highway contracts could go out to bid within 90 days if additional federal funds were made available.

Short Term FAA Extension Passes

Both the House and Senate took action yesterday approving legislation extending for six months authority for Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) programs and the aviation taxes to

pay for them. The President is expected to sign the bill. This action was necessary because Congress has been unable to pass an FAA reauthorization bill which has been under discussion for the past year. The 111th Congress must now take up FAA reauthorization next year. Both House and Senate committees of jurisdiction expressed the desire to complete action on the FAA bill before turning to the highway and transit reauthorization bill next year.

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