

WASHINGTON, DC--On Thursday, July 29, 2010, the House of Representatives approved the fiscal year 2011 Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies Appropriations bill. The following are the opening remarks made by the Transportation Housing and Urban Development Appropriations Subcommittee Chairman, John Olver:

It is my privilege and pleasure to present the fiscal year 2011 Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies Appropriations bill to the House.

The Committee-reported bill provides \$67.4 billion in discretionary resources, a decrease of \$500 million below the FY 2010 enacted level and more than \$1.3 billion below the President's request. Within an allocation that is 2% below the President's request, we have still been able to develop a bill that creates jobs through investments in infrastructure and supports families that have been hit the hardest by the foreclosure crisis. These targeted increases are possible because the bill makes a number of significant cuts from the budget, rejecting \$4.8 billion in new, unauthorized initiatives that were proposed by the Administration, including the National Infrastructure Bank, the Choice Neighborhoods program, and a major program to transform how our 3,200 public housing authorities function.

Specifically within transportation, investments are targeted to areas that will create skilled jobs immediately and build the infrastructure that underpins future economic growth. The fact remains that our transportation network has great investment needs with aging highways, bridges, and transit systems, and an air traffic control system in desperate need of modernization. It is my belief that we can no longer defer investments in our transportation systems which provide the foundation for our nation's economy. Specifically the bill provides:

- \$45.2 billion for the Federal Highway Administration, an increase of \$3.9 billion above the President's request that will allow states to complete additional infrastructure projects, spur the economy, and create approximately 142,000 new jobs;
- Over \$11.3 billion for public transportation programs, an increase in total budgetary resources of \$508 million above the president's request in order to help address the nearly \$80 billion maintenance backlog needed to meet a state of good repair on nation's fixed guideway and bus systems;

- A total of \$3.2 billion for Amtrak, the High Speed and Intercity Passenger Rail program and investments in positive train control. This includes a \$127.5 million increase for the first year of Amtrak's fleet plan that will support the development of a domestic manufacturing base for locomotives and rail cars; and
- \$1.16 billion for NextGen to modernize our outdated air traffic control system, which will reducing operation costs and allow airlines to utilize our airspace more efficiently.

Within housing, we were able to use a portion of the savings I mentioned earlier to fill holes where the President eliminated or deeply cut vital programs, including:

- Restoring funding to construct housing units for the elderly and disabled to their 2010 levels;
- \$75 million for 10,000 new VASH housing vouchers which continues Congress' commitment to homeless veterans;
- \$200 million for HOPE VI to rehabilitate the most severely distressed public housing communities in the nation; and
- Restores \$455 million to the Public Housing Capitol fund to help Public Housing Authorities make critical repairs and improvements to public housing units. Every dollar invested in this program returns over two dollars to the local economy.

This bill also recognizes that as the foreclosure crisis continues, with experts estimating that a record one million households will lose homes in 2010, access to supportive services is critical. To that extent, the bill:

- Continues the National Reinvestment Corporation's foreclosure mitigation counseling

program, as homeowners who receive counseling through this program are 60% more likely to avoid foreclosure than those who do not; and

- Provides \$2.2 billion for Homeless Assistance Grants to shelter families forced from their homes and take a strong step forward in our commitment to reduce chronic homelessness.

Overall, HUD programs are maintained at levels that will ensure affordable housing opportunities are available as families recover from the economic downturn.

More broadly, this bill recognizes that the current paradigm in which affordable housing is connected to unaffordable commutes is unsustainable for families' budgets. As such, the bill provides \$677 million to coordinate transportation infrastructure investments with the availability of housing and community services in order to decrease transportation costs; improve access to jobs and services; promote healthy communities; and enhance community connectivity.

Finally, I expect many members to come before this body today to talk about reducing spending and the moral imperative of not leaving a deficit for future generations. Let me remind everyone that the investments in this bill address another looming deficit – specifically, our infrastructure deficit. The Department of Transportation's most recent Conditions and Performance Report indicates that there is an annual investment gap of \$26.9 billion to maintain our current system of highways and bridges and an annual gap of \$95.9 billion to improve the system. Every dollar deferred today will catch up to the next generation in the form of falling bridges, broken roads, deteriorating housing, and an economy choked by congestion.

In conclusion, we worked hard to balance many competing needs to produce a bill that reflects the bipartisan needs of transportation and housing and puts Americans back to work. I am pleased with the product and I urge members to support it.