



## Monthly Legislative Report – December 2024

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### December Advocacy Meetings

**House Transportation and Infrastructure (T&I) Committee, Majority Staff** – We met with Committee staff to discuss the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA). We specifically discussed provisions in the act that would redistribute unobligated balances under the Transportation Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (TIFIA) program to the states through the existing Surface Transportation Block Grant (STBG) program. We also discussed potential new sub-committee chairmanships.

**Office of Congressman Mike Levin (D-CA)** – We followed up with Rep. Levin's staff to discuss potential ways to expedite permitting for work along the Los Angeles – San Diego – San Luis Obispo Rail Corridor (LOSSAN Corridor) in the Fiscal Year 2025 appropriations legislation that will likely be finalized in 2025.

**Office of Congresswoman Young Kim (R-CA)** – We met with Congresswoman Kim's staff to discuss provisions in the Fiscal Year 2025 (FY25) Continuing Appropriations legislation and possible extension of the alternative fuels excise tax credit for 2025.

**Office of Congressman Steve Womack (R-AR)** – We met with the Congressman's deputy chief of staff to discuss the possible extension of the alternative fuels excise tax credit.

**Congressman David Rouzer (R-NC)** – We met with Congressman Rouzer to follow up on provisions in WRDA that Congress enacted in December.

**Office of Congressman Derek Tran (D-CA)** – We met with Congressman Tran's new senior policy advisor to discuss potential committee assignments for the new Congressman and DC office staff members.

**Office of Congressman Mario Diaz-Balart (R-FL)** – We met with senior staff for Congressman to discuss provisions in the Continuing Resolution to include a debt ceiling increase and tax extenders.

**Office of Senator John Curtis (R-UT)** – We met with the new Senator from Utah and his staff to discuss his new committee assignment for the Senate Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee and briefly discuss the LOSSAN Corridor.

**Office of Congressman David Valadao (R-CA)** – We met with senior staff for Congressman to discuss the Continuing Resolution and the potential for permit expediting along the LOSSAN Corridor.

## **Fiscal Year 2025 Appropriations and Continuing Resolution (CR) Update**

On December 20, the U.S. House and Senate passed a second Continuing Resolution to extend federal spending and avert a government shutdown through March 14, 2025. President Biden signed the bill into law on December 21<sup>st</sup>. The bipartisan CR passed the U.S. House and Senate by bipartisan votes of 366-34 and 85-11, respectively. A prior version of the CR included additional provisions to increase the debt ceiling, but the House ultimately rejected that bill, and Congress instead enacted a pared-down stopgap.

The final agreement also provides \$110 billion in disaster aid, the first such appropriation since Hurricanes Helene and Milton tore through the Southeast U.S. this past fall. Allocations in the disaster relief funding include \$29 billion for the Federal Emergency Management Agency's response, recovery, and mitigation activities; \$12 billion for the Community Development Block Grant Disaster Recovery program; and \$8 billion in emergency highway funds, a portion of which will cover the full cost of replacing the collapsed Francis Scott Key Bridge in Baltimore. That project currently is estimated at nearly \$2 billion. Other disaster relief spending in the CR includes \$3.4 billion to repair storm damage at U.S. Dept. of Defense installations, \$3.1 billion for drinking water and wastewater infrastructure improvements, and \$1.5 billion to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for rehabilitation and repairs, studies and projects to reduce the risks of future disasters and to address water infrastructure needs.

The spending agreement also includes a one-year extension of the farm bill that governs many agricultural and nutrition assistance programs. Typically, the bill is renewed every five years, but the most recent version was passed in 2018, and the extension lapsed at the end of September.

## **Water Resources Development Act of 2024 (WRDA) Update**

Thomas R. Carper Water Resources Development Act of 2024 (WRDA) (S. 4367) was sent to the President to be signed into law after the Senate approved it on December 18<sup>th</sup> with a 97-1 vote. The House previously approved the measure on December 10, 2024, by a vote of 399 to 18.

WRDA authorizes the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to undertake locally-driven infrastructure and water resources projects that also deliver regional and national benefits to strengthen the nation's global competitiveness and supply chain, grow the economy, move goods throughout the country, protect communities from flooding, and more. The legislation also reauthorizes the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA's) National Dam Safety Program through 2028 and makes changes to strengthen the High Hazard Potential Dam program, including requiring that rehabilitated dams be maintained and appropriate floodplain management plans are in place.

The measure also includes the following:

- Provisions to increase the efficient use of federally-owned office space, including setting occupancy standards, ensuring federal workers return to the office, strengthening congressional oversight and public accountability of federal real estate projects, and selling certain unused federal properties.
- Provisions to redistribute unobligated balances under the Transportation Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (TIFIA) program to the states through the existing Surface Transportation Block Grant (STBG) program, and
- A reauthorization of the Economic Development Administration and other regional commissions whose mission is to spur economic development in distressed communities across the country.

### **Other End-of-Session Legislation Passed by Congress**

In addition to the CR and the WRDA legislation, other notable bills that that Congress passed before the end of session in December include:

- The **National Defense Authorization Act** for fiscal year 2025 (H.R. 5009), of which the Maritime Administration authorization is title XXXV, passed the House on December 11 by a vote of 281 to 140 and then passed the Senate on December 18 by a vote of 85-14. Presented to the President on December 20.
- The **Transportation Screening Modernization Act** (S. 3959) passed the Senate on November 21 by unanimous consent and then passed the House on December 18 by voice vote. The bill requires the Transportation Security Administration to streamline and expedite the process by which transportation workers apply for Transportation Worker Identity Cards and hazardous materials endorsements.
- The **VETS Safe Travel Act** (H.R. 7365) passed the House on December 10 by voice vote and passed the Senate December 19 by unanimous consent. The allows veterans with service-connected disabilities to enroll in the TSA Precheck program free of charge.
- The **Think Differently Transportation Act** (S. 4107) passed the Senate on December 3 and passed the House on December 17 by voice vote. The bill requires Amtrak to publish annual status reports on Americans with Disabilities Act compliance at each station it serves, including timelines for compliance at each station.

### **President-elect Trump Announces the Nomination for Federal Railroad Administrator**

On December 21<sup>st</sup> President-elect Trump announced his nominee for FRA administrator, David Fink, a former president of Pan Am Railways, a Massachusetts company that CSX acquired in 2022.

In a Truth Social post, the president-elect wrote that Fink “will deliver the FRA into a new era of safety and technological innovation.” This nomination will need Senate confirmation.

## **New Senate Republican Transportation Committee Assignments**

Incoming Senate Majority Leader John Thune (R-S.D.) on December 20th announced Republican Committee assignments for the next Congress. A link to the list of those assignments can be found at the following link [here](#).

## **Senate Approves President Biden's Amtrak Nominees**

On December 21<sup>st</sup>, the Senate, by voice vote, confirmed President Biden's nominee to the Amtrak board for five-year terms.

Those nominees included:

- David Capozzi, a former executive director of the U.S. Access Board;
- Ronald Batory, who led FRA during Trump's first term;
- Elaine Clegg, CEO of Valley Regional Transit in Idaho; and
- Lanhee Chen, a prominent California Republican and Stanford University lecturer.