Transportation Advisory Council

RE: National Transportation & Infrastructure

You may have heard about the big $1.3 trillion spending bill that Congress considered recently. The highlights transportation wins—particularly for rail and transit are as follows:

The bill includes:

- **$650 million for Amtrak’s Northeast Corridor account**—a $322 million increase over last fiscal year’s spending level. Because Amtrak runs an operating profit on the NEC, that $650 million will go straight to crucial capital projects that affect the whole corridor;

- **$1.5 billion for TIGER**—a $1 billion increase over last fiscal year’s spending level;

- **$250 million for the Federal-state partnership for State of Good Repair Program**—a $225 million increase over last fiscal year’s spending level. This is perhaps the most important grant program for the NEC, since it provides a federal match for the intra-state spending that needs to occur along the corridor to attack the backlog of projects;

- **$592.5 million for the Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements Grant Program**—a $525 million increase over last fiscal year’s spending level. This is a competitive grant program that funds capital projects and safety investments. $250 million of the $592.5 million is set aside for the implementation of Positive Train Control—a technology that would have prevented the Philadelphia Amtrak crash. This bill also includes a provision to make commuter rail operators—like Metro-North—eligible for the grant for the first time.

- **$2.645 billion for Capital Investment Grants**—a $232 million increase over last fiscal year’s spending level. This includes money for New Starts, Small Starts, and the Core Capacity Grant Program.

Overall, it’s a great bill for national transportation infrastructure including without limitation rail, short and long-haul bus systems, intermodal transportation centers, and mobility. As the appropriations bills for Fiscal Year 2019 and the looming long-term highway/transit authorization that needs to happen at the end of Fiscal Year 2020, I’ll try to keep you updated on these subject matters.

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