

## 3/18/2020 – Washington Policy Update

### Congressional Response to the Coronavirus

Congress is addressing its response to the health and economic impacts of the coronavirus through a series of spending and relief packages directed at specific sectors. Congress initially passed an \$8.3 billion emergency supplemental appropriations bill the week of March 2, 2020 to support state and local health agencies, vaccine and treatment development, and loans for affected small businesses to lessen the economic blow. The package provides funding through the Departments of Health and Human Services (\$6.497 billion) and State (\$1.25 billion), as well as the Food and Drug Administration (\$61 million) and the Small Business Administration (\$20 million). Further, the package authorizes an additional \$500 million in mandatory spending for telehealth through Medicare.

On March 16, 2020 the House passed a bill (PHASE II) that would allow the Senate to take up a revised second coronavirus spending bill (\$100 billion) aimed at nutrition and food assistance programs, tax provisions for paid sick and family and medical leave, reimbursement for testing, and unemployment insurance. The Senate is reviewing the House bill and may take it up this week.

### PHASE III?

Beyond these two bills, there are many ideas on what the next bill should include to continue addressing the response to the coronavirus. It has been reported that Senate Democrats will release a proposal to infuse \$750 billion in response funding directed towards hospital, unemployment insurance, funding for small business, childcare, and other items. Economic stimulus ideas abound and include investing in infrastructure. Senate Appropriations Committee Chairman Shelby (R-AL) was an early supporter of infrastructure investments. Senator [John Barrasso](#) (R-WY), Chairman of the Senate EPW Committee expressed his support for including parts of his committee's surface transportation bill in an economic relief package. He pointed to the formula funding in the bill where 90 percent of the money goes out by formula to all the states, as well as the increases in funding from previous years. He stressed the fact that formula funding levels to states would be a faster and simpler way to an economic stimulus. There is support in both chambers for infrastructure spending, but how much to spend on each sector is still under debate. State, cities, and countries are all weighing in with Congress as are the individual modes. The American Public Transportation Association (APTA) has requested almost \$13 billion to offset cost and revenue losses. Airports are requesting \$10 billion.

**Most recently (today) there are discussions about adding \$850 billion in economic stimulus to the PHASE II bill the House just sent to the Senate. The reports are coming out quickly and we will keep you apprised of the situation.**

The economic stimulus program cleared through Congress in early 2009 under the Obama administration was nearly \$800 billion, including a tax cut, infrastructure, and numerous other provisions.

AMPO has been in contact with Congressional infrastructure committees and will work with its transportation partners during this fast-moving process.

We will continue to update members as more information is available.