**FY2020 Appropriations**

Both chambers of Congress returned on Monday with three weeks left to keep the federal government open for business before the end of the fiscal year on September 30, 2019. With a two-year budget agreement signed into law before Congress broke for the August recess there is optimism that Congress can move several spending bills to the President’s desk before the end of the month. The Senate Appropriations Committee, which has not passed a single bill, is expected to approve a couple of bills this month. The House has passed the majority of its FY20 appropriations. However, there is general agreement amongst the leaders in Congress that they will need to pass a continuing resolution (CR) to keep those federal agencies, without an appropriation bill, open beyond the end of the month. House Majority Leader, Steny Hoyer (D-MD) announced the House will take up a clean CR the week of September 16th. Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY) has endorsed the idea of a short-term CR to avoid a government shutdown. The length of the CR could last till just before the Thanksgiving break (Nov 22).

**$7.6 Billion Rescission of Contract Authority**

Transportation stakeholder groups are requesting Congress to include, in the CR, a repeal of the $7.6 billion rescission of contract authority included in the FAST Act. The rescission will take place on July 1, 2020 without a repeal. Repealing the rescission will cost approximately the same amount, which means Congress would need to find $7.6 billion in new spending. After July 1, 2020 that cost may grow to ten times the amount due to budgetary scoring.

**Transit Account of the HTF Fails a Solvency Test**

The US Treasury announced earlier this year that the Mass Transit account of the HTF will not have enough future revenue (over a 48-month period) to pay for unfunded authorizations in 2020. This will result in approximately a 12% reduction in total apportionments to transit programs. To fix the shortfall Congress can either waive the solvency test or transfer funds to the Mass Transit account. Both would require legislation. FY20 Appropriations could carry a fix, but changes are in the jurisdiction of the Ways and Means Committee in the House and the Finance Committee in the Senate.

**Ban on Chinese Buses and Rail Purchase with Federal Money**

Just before Congress returned to Washington the White House endorsed the Senate version of language, included in the Defense Authorization bill, preventing federal transit dollars from being used to procure any rolling stock transit vehicles (buses and rail) from any “enterprises owned, controlled, or subsidized by certain foreign states.” A similar House provision only covers passenger rail cars.

**Competitive Highway Bridge Program Grants Awarded**

The U.S. Department of Transportation announced the recipients of $225 million in grant funding under the Competitive Highway Bridge Program (CHBP). The grants were awarded to 20 projects in 18 states to fund a variety of bridge improvements that include replacement and rehabilitation. The FY19 Transportation Appropriation bill established this grant program.

Link to USDOT award page https:[//www.fhwa.dot.gov/bridge/chbp/2019grantawards/](https://em-ui.constantcontact.com/em-ui/em/frame/previewtest/e75296ed-c7cf-4a03-9ee0-0747b3bde30c?previewTestJSVersion=0.1.226&previewTestJSHash=bdac8b0d43f4bbfe8cb5)