CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET OFFICE
COST ESTIMATE

July 28, 2009

Public Transportation Extension Act of 2009

As ordered reported by the Senate Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs on July 23, 2009

SUMMARY

The Public Transportation Extension Act of 2009 would extend through March 31, 2011, the federal transit programs authorized by the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act (SAFETEA-LU; Public Law 109-59). The bill would set the amount of contract authority (the authority to incur obligations in advance of appropriations and a mandatory form of budget authority) at $8.4 billion for 2010 and at $4.2 billion for the period from October 1, 2010, through March 31, 2011. The bill also would authorize discretionary appropriations of $3.0 billion over the same period for several programs that do not receive contract authority.

Consistent with the rules in the Balanced Budget and Emergency Deficit Control Act for constructing the baseline, CBO assumes that funding provided by the bill for the first six months of fiscal year 2011 would continue at the same rate through the rest of that year and in each of the following years. Hence, CBO estimates that enacting the bill would result in baseline contract authority totaling $84 billion over the 2010-2019 period. That funding level represents an increase of $1 billion ($100 million per year) above the amounts of contract authority for public transportation programs currently projected in CBO's baseline for the 2010-2019 period.

CBO expects that most spending for public transportation programs will continue to be controlled by limits on annual obligations set in appropriation acts. Consequently, the changes in contract authority would not increase mandatory outlays. CBO estimates that, subject to the enactment of annual obligation limitations for the 18-month period of program extension, as well as the discretionary appropriations that would be authorized by the bill, implementing this legislation would increase discretionary spending by $15.4 billion over the 2010-2019 period. CBO estimates that enacting the bill would not affect revenues.

The bill contains no intergovernmental or private-sector mandates as defined in the Unfunded Mandates Reform Act (UMRA) and would impose no costs on state, local, or tribal governments.

ESTIMATED COST TO THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

The estimated budgetary impact of the legislation is summarized in the following table. The costs of this legislation fall within budget function 400 (transportation).

	By Fiscal Year, in Billions of Dollars											
	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2010-2014	2010-2019
CHANGES IN DIRECT SPENDING												
Budget Authority	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.5	1.0
Estimated Outlays	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
CHANGES IN SPENDING SUBJECT TO APPROPRIATION												
Trust Fund Spending for Transit												
Obligation Limitation	8.4	4.2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	12.6	12.6
Estimated Outlays	1.3	3.1	2.9	2.1	1.6	1.1	0.3	0	0	0	11.0	12.4
Other Transit Programs												
Authorization Level	2.0	1.0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3.0	3.0
Estimated Outlays	0.4	0.8	0.7	0.5	0.3	0.2	0.1	0	0	0	2.7	3.0
Total Changes												
Authorization Level/ Obligation Limitation	10.4	5.2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	15.6	15.6
Estimated Outlays	1.7	3.9	3.6	2.6	1.9	1.3	0.4	0	0	0	13.7	15.4

a. Estimated discretionary outlays reflect use of funds under the 2010 and part-year 2011 obligation limitations estimated by CBO. (Outlays stemming from additional contract authority shown in the table would be authorized in future legislation that covers the period after the 18-month program extension.)

BASIS OF ESTIMATE

Direct Spending

The Public Transportation Extension Act of 2009 would extend through March 31, 2011, public transportation programs authorized by SAFETEA-LU, the current authorization for transportation programs. For transit programs funded by the Highway Trust Fund, the bill would set the amount of contract authority (the authority to incur obligations in advance of appropriations and a mandatory form of budget authority) at $8.4 billion for 2010 and at $4.2 billion for the period from October 1, 2010, to March 31, 2011.

The bill would provide contract authority (from the transit account of the Highway Trust Fund) for transit programs at the same level authorized in SAFETEA-LU for 2009, notwithstanding any rescissions or cancellations of contract authority either in

SAFETEA-LU or any other act. SAFETEA-LU provided $8.4 billion in contract authority for 2009. However, the 2009 Omnibus Appropriations Act (Public Law 111-8) contained rescissions of the 2009 program's contract authority that totaled $100 million. The Balanced Budget and Emergency Deficit Control Act specifies that the baseline projection for the cost of an expiring mandatory program with current-year outlays in excess of $50 million be assumed to continue at the program level in place when it is scheduled to expire. As a result, CBO has incorporated the rescission in contract authority in its baseline for transit programs over the 2010-2019 period.

Combined with the rescissions contained in the 2009 Omnibus Appropriations Act, contract authority available for public transportation programs is $8.3 billion in 2009, and CBO projects that same amount in subsequent years. As a result, CBO estimates that the bill would add $100 million (the difference between $8.4 billion and $8.3 billion) of contract authority annually to the baseline over the 2010-2019 period.

CBO expects that spending from contract authority available to public transportation programs will be controlled by limits on annual obligations set in appropriation acts. Consequently, the changes in contract authority would not increase mandatory outlays.

Spending Subject to Appropriation

CBO's estimate of discretionary spending under this legislation reflects the proposed limitation on obligations that would be provided under the bill and does not include projections of that authority beyond the time period covered in this legislation. The bill would extend the obligation limitations contained in SAFETEA-LU—$8.4 billion for 2010 and $4.2 billion for the first six months of 2011. CBO estimates outlays from those obligation limitations would be $12.4 billion over the 2010-2019 period.

In addition, for fiscal year 2010 and the first six months of 2011, the bill would authorize the appropriation of $3.0 billion for other transit programs—capital investment grants and research and university research centers—as well as administrative costs of the Federal Transit Administration. Based on historical spending for those programs, and subject to appropriation of the specified amounts, CBO estimates that implementing those provisions would cost $3.0 billion over the 2010-2019 period.

In total, CBO estimates that implementing the legislation would increase discretionary costs by $1.7 billion in 2010 and $15.4 billion over the 2010-2019 period.

INTERGOVERNMENTAL AND PRIVATE-SECTOR MANDATES

The bill contains no intergovernmental or private-sector mandates as defined in UMRA and would impose no costs on state, local, or tribal governments.

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