



United States Senate
Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs

Christopher J. Dodd (D-CT), Chairman

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REMARKS OF CHAIRMAN CHRISTOPHER J. DODD
U.S. SENATE COMMITTEE ON BANKING, HOUSING, AND URBAN AFFAIRS
MARK-UP OF THE PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION EXTENSION ACT OF 2009

I now call up an original bill to provide an extension of public transportation programs authorized under the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users.

This bill was developed in a bipartisan fashion with Senator Shelby and his staff and extends public transportation programs for 18 months - from October 1, 2009 through March 31, 2010 at fiscal year 2009 authorized funding levels.

We expect that this bill will be merged with similar bills from the EPW, Commerce, and Finance Committees on the Senate floor next week.

Let me be clear that while I agree with the Administration and the leadership that there is simply too much on our plate to move a transportation bill through the Congress this year, I am not ready to concede that we cannot move forward on a transportation bill early next year.

When the Administration presented its 18 month extension proposal to Senate leaders, I advocated for six months instead so that we could try to get a bill done next year, rather than wait until 2011. Regardless of the length of the extension Congress ultimately passes, I intend to work with my colleagues to try to move a bill early next year.

Investing in our highways, bridges, freight networks, transit systems, and high-speed rail corridors is simply too important for this nation's future economic competitiveness, economic growth and our quality of life to put off for too long. And in these difficult economic times, it is important to remember that these investments also mean good jobs.

A new transportation bill is needed to both reform the way we approach transportation policy and to increase the amount of funding we invest in our transportation infrastructure. One change needed in our approach to transportation policy of special interest to this Committee is the need for a renewed commitment to investing in public transportation.

If we are to address challenges like climate change, energy security and worsening traffic congestion, not to mention significant population growth and demographic changes, we need to take a new look at public transportation.

For all of these reasons, I will continue to work with my colleagues in the Senate, with the House, and with the Administration to look for opportunities to advance a transformational transportation bill next year.