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To view this report as a pdf, go to: <http://www.calinst.org/pubs/FASTAct.pdf>

SPECIAL REPORT: *FAST ACT* January 2016

The Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act was signed into law December 4, 2015. FAST is a bipartisan five-year law to improve the Nation's surface transportation infrastructure, including roads, bridges, transit systems, and the rail transportation network. FAST includes provisions to ensure the \$300 billion dollar bill is fully paid for and that the Highway Trust Fund is authorized to meet its obligations through FY 2020. The conference committee settled the funding matter by using money that the Federal Reserve Bank uses as a cushion against losses and by reducing the amount of interest the Federal Reserve pays to banks. The bill increases spending on highways by \$2.1 billion in the first year and by \$6.1 billion in the final year, 2020.

Roads and Bridges

The FAST Act refocuses existing funding for a National Highway Freight Program and a Nationally Significant Freight and Highway Projects Program and expands funding available for bridges off the National Highway System. FAST also converts the Surface Transportation Program (STP) to a block grant program and rolls the Transportation Alternatives Program into the STP Block Grant. FAST streamlines environmental review and the permitting process to accelerate project approvals. It also improves project delivery by eliminating or consolidating at least six offices within the Department of Transportation and establishing a National Surface Transportation and Finance Bureau. FAST additionally increases transparency by requiring the Department of Transportation to provide project-level information to Congress and the public. FAST utilizes technological advances by promoting the deployment of transportation technologies and congestion management tools, the installation of vehicle-to-infrastructure equipment, and the updating of research and transportation standards.

Public Transportation

FAST increases bus funding by 89% over the five years of the bill and provides stable formula funding and a competitive grant program to address bus and bus facility needs. FAST also establishes a pilot program for communities to expand transit through the use of public-private partnerships. FAST will also require a review of safety standards and protocols to evaluate the need to establish federal minimum safety standards and requires the results to be made public.

Highway and Motor Vehicle Safety

FAST focuses funding for roadway safety critical needs. The law also increases the percentage of National Priority Safety Program states can spend on traditional safety programs, the number of states that are eligible for safety incentive grant funds, and the amount of funding available for

highway-railway grade crossings. FAST has several safety measures including requiring a feasibility study for an impairment standard for drivers under the influence of marijuana, improving the auto safety recall process, and increasing accountability in the automobile industry for safety-related issues.

Truck and Bus Safety

FAST aims to improve transparency by overhauling the rulemaking process for truck and bus safety and by accelerating the introduction of new transportation technologies. FAST also provides incentives for the adoption of innovative truck and bus safety technologies. Finally, FAST will consolidate truck and bus safety grant programs and provide states with flexibility on safety priorities.

Hazardous Materials

FAST grants states more power to decide how to spend training and planning funds for first responders and requires Class I railroads to provide crude oil movement information to emergency responders. FAST reforms a grant program for state and Indian tribe emergency response efforts. FAST also leverages training funding for hazmat employees and speeds up administrative processes for hazmat special permits and approvals. Finally, FAST enhances safety by requiring testing and data-driven approaches to brake technology.

Railroads

FAST provides a few reforms for AMTRAK. First of all, FAST reorganizes the way Amtrak operates into business lines. Second, FAST also allows competitors to operate up to three Amtrak long-distance lines if they are at less cost to the taxpayer. Third, FAST strengthens the Northeast Corridor planning to make Amtrak more accountable and states equal partners. FAST also gives states greater control of their routes by creating a State-Supported Route Committee while also establishing a Federal-State Partnership for a State of Good Repair grant program. Finally, FAST speeds up the environmental review process for rail projects and the Railroad Rehabilitation and Improvement Financing (RRIF) loan approval process.

For more information see: <http://transportation.house.gov/fast-act/#top1>
https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/trafficandcommuting/after-weeks-of-negotiations-congress-finalizes-5-year-transportation-bill/2015/12/01/e86f1704-979a-11e5-94f0-9eeaff906ef3_story.html
and
http://www.nytimes.com/2015/12/02/us/politics/bipartisan-talks-yield-dollar300-billion-highway-bill.html?_r=0