

**NEWS from Congressman John W. Olver (MA-1)
Chair, House Appropriations Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing
and Urban Development**

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Chairman John W. Olver
Opening Remarks, Fiscal Year 2011 THUD Appropriations Subcommittee
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The bill before us provides \$67.4 billion in discretionary resources, a decrease of \$500 million below the FY10 enacted level and more than \$1.3 billion below the President's request. Even with an allocation below last year, we were able to put together a bill that continues to invest in our transportation and housing programs.

With regard to housing programs, the bill maintains sufficient funding levels for HUD's affordable housing programs and keeps millions of low-income Americans in their homes. While the economic climate has improved in the last year, foreclosure rates remain high and the demand for housing assistance continues to outweigh the resources available.

As part of the bill's commitment to sustaining access to affordable housing, we have focused on improving and strengthening existing programs through strong oversight rather than embarking on new initiatives.

Examples of existing programs supported by this bill include:

- \$825 million for Housing for the Elderly and \$300 million for Housing for Persons with Disabilities, restoring cuts proposed in the budget request of \$551 million and \$210 million, respectively. In addition, the bill instructs HUD to take administrative action to improve the functioning of these programs;
- \$19.5 billion for Section 8 Tenant-based rental assistance, \$886 million above last year in order to renew all vouchers currently in use; provide 10,000 new vouchers for homeless veterans through the VASH program, which is funded at \$75 million; and a new demonstration to provide housing and services to homeless families and individuals;
- \$150 million for the HECM program, which is a funding level sufficient to cover the expected volume for fiscal year 2011;
- \$200 million for HOPE VI, a \$65 million increase above last year, to provide grants to rehabilitate severely distressed public housing; and
- \$2.1 billion for Homeless Assistance Grants to provide permanent and transitional housing for homeless families and individuals.

The last highlight I want to mention in regards to HUD is the bill's continued commitment to building sustainable housing units that incorporate green building practices and livable community principles that have the potential to reduce operating costs and improve the quality of life for residents. In particular, the bill includes:

- \$150 million for the Sustainable Communities Initiative for the second year in a row to support a partnership with DOT and EPA that seeks to help communities better coordinate their housing and transportation resources;
- \$17.5 million for Brownfields Redevelopment to return previously contaminated sites to productive use; and
- The bill continues to support funding for improving energy efficiency through the Public Housing Capital Fund and the Indian Housing Block Grants.

With regard to transportation, it is no secret that the surface and aviation programs have been operating without long-term authorizations. As a result, the programs have remained moderately flat except for the investments made last year in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. The fact remains that our transportation network has great

investment needs with aging highways, bridges, and transit systems, and an air traffic control system in desperate need of modernization. It is my belief that we can no longer defer investments in our transportation systems which provide the foundation for our nation's economy.

Specifically the bill provides:

- \$45.2 billion for the Federal Highway Administration, an increase of \$3.9 billion above the President's request that will allow states to complete additional infrastructure projects, spur the economy, and create tens of thousands of additional jobs;
- Over \$11.3 billion for public transportation programs, an increase of \$508 million above the president's request in order to help address the nearly \$80 billion maintenance backlog needed to meet a state of good repair on nation's fixed guideway and bus systems; and
- A total of \$3.2 billion for Amtrak, the High Speed and Intercity Passenger Rail program and investments in positive train control, continuing the commitment to build a 21st century rail network.

I am also pleased that this bill is able to fund the Department's Livable Communities Initiative while also providing states with resources for

additional highway and transit investments. This program will allow communities to get more out of their federal dollars through the integration of transportation, housing, and energy planning processes with families reaping the rewards in the form of lowered housing and commuting costs.

This bill also underscores the Subcommittee's commitment to the Department's core mission of safety. Traffic fatalities in 2009 dropped to the lowest level since 1954, however, as the economy improves and drivers return to the road, we must remain vigilant in order to retain our safety gains. To that extent the bill provides:

- \$50 million for Secretary LaHood's Distracted Driving Initiative to address the proliferation of wireless devices and in vehicle entertainment systems that offer multiple opportunities to distract drivers' attention from the road;
- \$1.43 billion, \$36 million above last year for the activities of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration and the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration.

Finally, with regard to aviation, the bill includes a total of nearly \$16.5 billion for the Federal Aviation Administration's operations, capital,

research and airport grant programs and invests a total of \$1.16 billion for the NextGen program. In addition, the bill provides strong oversight of the agency's operations to ensure that:

- Critical safety equipment is deployed in a reasonable time frame;
- Air traffic controller training initiatives are managed effectively;
- Adequate oversight is conducted on foreign repair stations; and
- Safety technician staffing levels are maintained at or above agreed upon minimums throughout the year.

In conclusion, this is a good bill and I ask for the Subcommittee's support in moving it forward. Before I recognize the Chairman and Ranking Member of the full committee, Mr. Obey and Mr. Lewis, I would like to recognize our Ranking Member Tom Latham for any comments that he would like to make.