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| |  | | --- | | **Friday, November 16, 2012 121116-1**  **In this Issue:**  **House GOP Rejects Proposals To Restore Earmarks And Extend Term-Limit For Committee Chairs**  **Fiscal Cliff Talks Begin At White House – Infrastructure Package May Be Considered**  **Legislative Analyst’s Office Releases Reports on Public Private Partnerships and 2013-2014 Budget Outlook** | | |
| **House GOP Rejects Proposals To Restore Earmarks And Extend Term-Limit For Committee Chairs**  Yesterday, House Republicans rejected a proposal from Congressman Phil Gingrey (R-GA) that would have permitted longer term limits for committee chairs and ranking members. At present, the House Republican Conference has a rule that limits committee chairman, like Transportation and Infrastructure Committee Chairman John Mica (R-FL), to a six year term. The proposal from Congressman Gingrey would have amended rule 14(e) by counting service as a ranking member as a half year, arguing that service as a ranking member is much different that serving as a chairman of a given panel. Because Congressman Mica had served as the ranking member of the Transportation & Infrastructure Committee for four years and chairman as only two, approval of the Gingrey amendment would have effectively extended his leadership of the committee for another two years. It is now anticipated that Congressman Mica will seek a waiver from rule 14(e) from Speaker John Boehner (R-OH).  A campaign by former Transportation & Infrastructure Committee Chairman, Congressman Don Young (R-AK) to partially restore earmarks was defeated before even being considered by the House Republican Conference. Congressman Young had sought to modify the current ban on earmarks in the U.S. House of Representatives by permitting earmarks to be granted to units of local government. Speaker John Boehner (R-OH) had expressed his opposition to the Young proposal and that is largely seen as the reason the proposal was not formally brought before the House Republican Conference.  **Fiscal Cliff Talks Begin At White House – Infrastructure Package May Be Considered**  President Obama began fiscal cliff talks at the White House today with Congressional leaders. The fiscal cliff refers to the combined effects of tax increases and across the board spending cuts slated to begin at the conclusion of calendar year 2012. President Obama and some congressional leaders have expressed an interest in including funds for America’s infrastructure in any “grand bargain” that is struck during the fiscal cliff talks. Whether this potential infusion of federal funds is derived from modifications to the current federal gas tax, or other sources, is unclear. Our federal advocacy team is closely monitoring the fiscal cliff talks and will work to ensure that our Board-approved legislative program is included in any final agreement should it include funds for transportation programs and projects.  **Legislative Analyst’s Office Releases Reports on Public Private Partnerships and 2013-2014 Budget Outlook**  The California Legislative Analyst’s Office (LAO), recently released two reports, (1) Maximizing State Benefits from Public-Private Partnerships, which outlines how Caltrans and regional transportation planning agencies, among others, can benefit from potential Public-Private Partnerships (P3) on major infrastructure projects and (2) California’s Budget Outlook which reports on the projected 2013-2014 Fiscal Outlook for the state.  The LAO’s P3 report cites that the state, Caltrans and regional planning agencies can benefit from building projects utilizing the P3 mechanism for funding, design, construction, and maintenance. The LAO found that the state, Caltrans and regional transportation agencies need to establish a clear process for determining what projects are best suited for a P3. A funding mechanism like a P3 is important for our long-range plan and we will continue to work with the legislature to preserve the ability to utilize it on a variety of projects. The report can be found by clicking [here](http://lao.ca.gov/laoapp/PubDetails.aspx?id=2666).  (<http://lao.ca.gov/laoapp/PubDetails.aspx?id=2666>  The LAO’s report on the Budget Outlook for 2013-2014 highlights that due to several factors, including economic recovery, the passage of Proposition 30 and  previous budget cuts, the state can expect to see an improved budget situation and a possible surplus through 2017-2018. With Proposition 30’s passage, a small deficit is still projected in 2013-2014.The LAO also found that aging infrastructure and deferred maintenance needs can be addressed with potential budget surpluses that are forecasted in the next decade.  The LAO also highlights that unemployment in California is projected to fall to 6.7% with the continued creation of new jobs. Metro’s Government Relations department is monitoring the budget situation closely and will continue to work with the State Legislature to ensure that funding for transportation and infrastructure projects remain a priority. The report can be found by clicking [here](http://lao.ca.gov/reports/2012/bud/fiscal-outlook/fiscal-outlook-2012.pdf).  (<http://lao.ca.gov/reports/2012/bud/fiscal-outlook/fiscal-outlook-2012.pdf> |
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