

Omnibus Spending Bill Will Save Transit Grant Programs—for Five Months*

Congress passed a \$1.1 trillion omnibus spending bill to keep the government operating through September that also restores funding to transportation programs that the president had eliminated or greatly reduced. Trump signed the bill Friday.

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By [Irvin Dawid](#)



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[Updated May 9, 2017] The fiscal [2017 omnibus spending bill](#) provides \$19.3 billion for the U.S. [Department of Transportation](#) (DOT), which President Trump would have cut by [13 percent](#) or \$2.4 billion, reports [Melanie Zanona](#) for *The Hill*. Trump had proposed:

- Eliminating funding for the [Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery \(TIGER\) grant program](#)
- Limiting funding for the Federal Transit Administration's [Capital Investment Grant Program](#) only to those projects already locked in with formal federal commitments, known as "[full funding grant agreements](#)."

The 2017 omnibus bill includes a new round of \$500 million in TIGER grants, [reports AASHTO Journal](#), and adds \$126 million to the FTA grant program.

One project that hopes to benefit from the additional funding in the transit grants program is [Caltrain electrification](#) between San Francisco and San Jose. The budget bill includes \$100 million for the project, [reports](#) Samantha Weigel for *The (San Mateo) Daily Journal*.

It's good progress," said Caltrain Chief Communications Officer Seamus Murphy. "We just need two things to happen for that \$100 million to be accessible to us, one is to get the full funding grant agreement signed and two is for the legislation the bill to be approved by [Congress](#) and signed by the president."

The latter was done on Friday, but the \$2 billion question, the total cost of the [project](#), hinges on Chao's signature to access the \$647 million grant as well as the \$100 million in omnibus.

The [embattled](#) project may ultimately be derailed by Secretary of Transportation Elaine Chao's decision on Feb. 17 to [defer signing a full funding grant agreement \(FFGA\)](#), thereby denying the rail agency a \$647 million [core capacity improvement grant](#) as well as the \$100 million.

Somewhat similar to Caltrain is Maryland's light-rail [Purple Line](#), with \$125 million designated provided Chao signs a FFGA, [reports](#) Faiz Siddiqui for *The Washington Post*. Unlike Caltrain, though, it has a looming [legal problem](#) it needs to resolve first.

Siddiqui also reports that [D.C. Metro](#) will receive \$150 million in the omnibus bill, "but it's unclear whether Congress will approve funding for the remainder of the 10-year, \$1.5 billion federal program."

According to a [House Appropriations summary](#) (pdf) showing transportation, housing and urban development appropriations in the bill, "the bill provides \$1.5 billion for Amtrak."

The bill adopts the new Amtrak funding structure as authorized, providing \$328 million for Amtrak's [Northeast Corridor](#) and \$1.2 billion to support the National Network.

The [NARP Hotline](#) lays out the specific categories designated for Amtrak funding.

[Stephen Lee Davis](#) also provides an [update](#) for Transportation for America on how the omnibus may fund "the scores of projects expected to sign grant agreements this year, like planned [bus rapid transit](#) projects in Albuquerque, Indianapolis, Everett (WA), and Kansas City, among many others." See FTA [Current Capital Investment Grant \(CIG\) Projects](#).

The House [passed](#) the bill on Wednesday and the Senate followed on Friday. President Trump [signed](#) the bill Friday afternoon while at his golf club in New Jersey.

Hat tip to [L.A. Transportation Headlines](#).

[Headline updated with correct time period.]

FULL STORY: [Congress saves transportation programs from Trump's proposed cuts](#)

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