## Neg Updates

### 2nc Link / AT: N/U – Transportation Bill \*\*\*

Transportation bill was a compromise bill that maintained current funding --- no support for more ambitious policies

Rampton, 6/29 (Roberta Rampton and Thomas Ferraro, “Congress poised to wrap up transport, loans, flood bill,” 6/29/2012, http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/06/29/us-usa-transportation-house-idUSBRE85S16K20120629)

(Reuters) - A bipartisan bill to fund a massive job-creating transportation bill, retain low interest rates for millions of student loans, and maintain national flood insurance won approval on Friday in the U.S. House of Representatives.

On a vote of 373-52, the House sent the measure to the Senate for anticipated concurrence later in the day, which would clear the way for President Barack Obama to sign it into law.

Both Democrats and Republicans embraced the measure, largely because it would create or save about three million jobs, a key issue in the November 6 elections since voters' top concern is the struggling U.S. economy.

The bill came together this week as lawmakers calculated the election-year impact of continued gridlock on measures affecting jobs, soaring consumer debt, and help for people who need government underwriting for flood risk to buy a home.

"It has indeed been a very bumpy road to get to this point," said John Mica, the Republican chairman of the House Transportation Committee, who led negotiations on the bill.

"I'm not particularly pleased with some of the twists and tu-HOUSErns," he said on the House floor on Friday, describing the difficulties of reaching the deal in the gridlocked Congress.

After months of negotiations, the compromise was reached just days away from the deadline for an increase in student loan rates and for a lapse in transportation funding.

Ambitious proposals to shore up U.S. infrastructure gave way to a deal that basically keeps transportation funding at current levels.

The blueprint was based on a bipartisan proposal by the Democratic-led Senate and was supported by the Obama administration.

## Aff Updates

#### Link isn’t unique --- Obama spent political capital on the transportation bill

Simon, 6/29 (Richard, 6/29/2012, “Congress passes transportation bill, halts student loan rate hike,” <http://articles.latimes.com/2012/jun/29/news/la-pn-congress-passes-transportation-bill-halts-student-loan-rate-hike-20120629>)

"The American people finally will have a jobs bill from this Congress,’’ said Eleanor Holmes Norton, a Democrat who is the Washington, D.C., delegate to the House.

The first major transportation bill since 2005, the legislation would keep highway and transit spending at current levels through the end of fiscal year 2014. It includes an expansion of a federal loan program sought by Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa and other mayors to fast-track bus and rail projects in traffic-choked regions.

The House approved the bill by a 373-52 vote, demonstrating the power of pothole politics. The Senate approved it 74-19.

The bill would provide financial incentives to states that crack down on distracted driving, require ignition interlock devices for DUI offenders and establish graduated licensing programs that restrict teenagers' driving privileges. It also would impose new safety rules on interstate passenger buses in response to a number of high-profile tour bus crashes.

"Do not give up hope,’’ said Sen. Barbara Boxer (D-Calif.), chairwoman of the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee. She said the bill’s passage was evidence "that we can work together.’’

The bill was passed only after lawmakers once again faced deadlines — a possible shutdown of the highway program Saturday and a doubling of student interest loan rates Sunday. Lawmakers also did something unusual for this Congress: They compromised.

Republicans, in the face of White House opposition, dropped an effort to use the bill to try to advance the controversial Keystone XL oil pipeline from Canada. Environmentalists said the bill would weaken environmental reviews in order to satisfy Republican calls for speedier project approvals

“The dramatic reforms in this measure will get projects moving by cutting the red tape that delays projects across the country and drives up construction costs,’’ said House Transportation Committee Chairman John L. Mica (R-Fla.).

Democrats made concessions that are likely to lead to less funding for bicycle, pedestrian and beautification projects. Republican leaders, despite opposition within their conservative ranks, agreed to find money from sources other than the gas tax to fund transportation projects, such as higher employer premiums to the pension insurance agency, the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corp. All the "no" votes were cast by Republicans.

"It has been obvious for many years that the current gasoline tax is not enough to meet the desire of Congress to spend on transportation," said Ryan Alexander, president of the watchdog Taxpayers for Common Sense. He accused lawmakers of relying on "budgetary smoke and mirrors’’ to fund projects.

The 599-page bill, which could be one of the last major pieces of legislation to pass Congress before the election, includes other measures such as targeting the Asian carp, an invasive species threatening the Great Lakes, and steering 80% of the fines that will be paid by BP -- up to $21 billion by one estimate – from the 2010 Gulf of Mexico oil spill to help restore Gulf Coast ecosystems and rebuild economies in the region.