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San Diego – In a positive turn of events on Thursday to stabilize federal funding for San Diego's transportation infrastructure projects, Congress beat a critical Friday deadline by approving long-term and short-term legislation to keep transportation money flowing to the 50 states.

In one action, the U.S. Senate passed a sweeping, long-term transportation bill, setting up discussions with the House of Representatives in the coming months on what the future of transportation policy should look like.

The second action saw the U.S. Senate pass a stopgap measure to fund the federal highway program. President Obama signed the bill on Friday morning to avoid a shutdown of transportation projects nationwide.

"After 33 short-term extensions for federal transit funding, hopefully the 34th will be the last one for a while. Give credit to Congress for taking this step. We need a stable long-term federal funding plan to ensure our system remains healthy," said Paul Jablonski, chief executive officer at the San Diego Metropolitan Transit System. "I think our Stand Up for Transportation rally in April was heard 2,600 miles away in Washington DC."

On April 9, MTS led a Stand Up for Transportation rally with local elected officials and business leaders calling on Congress to solve this transportation infrastructure funding dilemma. More than 350 organizations participated in 150 similar events across the country.

The three-month stopgap bill, which expires Oct. 29, provides breathing room for Congress to focus in on a long-term solution for federal transportation funding. A long-term, \$350 billion bill approved by the U.S. Senate by vote of 65 to 34 would provide funding only for the first three years of the six-year bill.

"While it's not a fully funded six-year bill, we have to appreciate the resolve of the U.S. Senate to find common ground. Hopefully Congress can reconcile the funding gap when the two chambers meet in conference," added Jablonski.

As the next step in the process, the House is expected to craft their own long-term bill, and then, if approved, the chambers would begin negotiations in the fall to hash out the details of the final long-term transportation plan.

MTS has used more than \$45 million in federal transit funding to purchase 216 new buses over the past five years. Federal funding has also been used for improvement projects such as revitalizing the entire Trolley system, constructing new bus maintenance facilities and building the

new bus rapid transit system called Rapid. Additionally, the Federal Transit Administration annually provides about \$50 million to MTS for maintenance activities such as vandalism repairs, fare collection functions and station upgrades.

MTS operates 95 bus routes and three Trolley lines on 53 miles of double-tracked railway. Every weekday more than 300,000 passenger trips are taken on MTS bus and Trolley services. MTS is expecting to set a new record this year with more than 97 million riders. For more information on how you can use public transportation and save money, go to www.sdmts.com.

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