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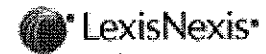
# Boxer Wants TIGER to Roar in Next Highway Bill

Posted: March 29th, 2010 10:15 AM EDT

**Josh Voorhees**

*Environment and Energy Daily*

NATION - A widely popular transportation program created by last year's stimulus package could see new life in the next multiyear highway bill.



Senate Environment and Public Works Chairwoman Barbara Boxer (D-Calif.) said yesterday that she wants to include a provision similar to the Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery, or TIGER, program in the bill her panel is drafting.

The \$1.5 billion grant program for innovative, long-term work is aimed at funding multimodal projects that have traditionally been difficult to fund through existing federal programs.

The Transportation Department received more than \$50 billion worth of requests from states. DOT handed out the \$1.5 billion to more than 50 major projects in 41 states, including an expansion of New York City's Pennsylvania Station, reconstruction of a container yard in Honolulu and improvements along a number of freight rail lines in the mid-Atlantic.

Boxer asked DOT officials for help in drafting the TIGER language that would be part of her highway legislation.

DOT Deputy Secretary John Porcari said his agency would be willing to work with the EPW Committee and called the TIGER program key to the administration's transportation goals, specifically efforts to shift more freight off the nation's roads to increase mobility, and combat congestion and the fuel consumption and greenhouse gas emissions that accompany it.

"I think the TIGER grants point the way to the future in intermodal transportation," Porcari said.

Many in the transportation community cheered the creation of the grant program, saying that it could serve as a pilot program for performance-driven decision-making ahead of the next highway and transit bill. Traditionally, the bulk of federal transportation investment has been allocated according to funding formulas, but transportation experts and a number of lawmakers have called for an overhaul of the system to make it more innovative and mode-neutral.

A number of transportation advocates have lobbied lawmakers to reload the TIGER program with additional federal funding as part of a series of "jobs" bills Democrats have rolled out this year, but they have been unsuccessful to date.

Still, the program has a number of similarities to a national infrastructure bank proposed by President

Obama that would provide direct federal funding and seed money for large-scale capital project grants that provide substantial economic benefit to the nation or a region. Obama requested \$4 billion to launch the bank in his fiscal 2011 budget proposal, \$2.6 billion of which would be handed out in grants or loans during fiscal 2011.

The program has drawn some criticism, however, specifically over how and where the administration doled out the grants.

Rep. John Mica (R-Fla.), the top Republican on the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, has complained that his state received no federal cash from the program and has said that the decisionmaking process lacked transparency and, in effect, represented executive earmarks.

The American Highway Users Alliance has also criticized the funding decisions, arguing that road and bridge work received a disproportionately small amount of the funds.

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## The Washington Post

# Metro woes may put federal funding for transit projects at risk

By Katherine Shaver  
Washington Post Staff Writer  
Thursday, April 1, 2010; B01

The deterioration of Washington's Metro system could jeopardize federal funding for new transit projects in the area, including a Purple Line light-rail system in Maryland and streetcar networks in Arlington County and the District.

In awarding highly competitive funding for new projects, the Federal Transit Administration considers applicants' ability to maintain their current transit systems. Because governments in Maryland, the District and Northern Virginia are partially responsible for funding Metro, the FTA will weigh the safety and reliability of the Metro system before granting money for new transit lines, transportation planners said.

"The bottom line is, we'll have to solve the Metro problem in order to do new things," said Ronald F. Kirby, transportation planning director for the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments.

An FTA spokesman said it would be premature to say whether Metro's situation would affect a proposal's chances for federal money until transit planners submit a detailed application.

But it happened in 2008. Metro's long list of safety and infrastructure needs became a sticking point when the FTA initially balked at spending \$900 million to help extend the subway to Tysons Corner. That was before Metro had several fatal accidents and safety lapses, which prompted the Obama administration to call for federal oversight of light-rail and subway systems nationwide.

"To the extent [Metro] was a problem with Dulles rail, it's going to be an even bigger challenge for other projects now," Kirby said.

Meanwhile, Metro is struggling to find ways to close historic gaps in its operating and capital budgets, including \$11 billion in system repairs and upgrades that it has outlined for the

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### Metro woes may put federal funding for transit projects at risk

next decade.

Some officials say they're also worried about whether Metro can absorb the transit-oriented development that Washington area land-use plans are based on. Those plans assume that focusing jobs, homes and entertainment around Metro stations will accommodate population growth, curb traffic and revitalize downtrodden areas.

"If the [Metro] rail line isn't healthy, the entire region suffers," said David F. Snyder, a Falls Church City Council member and chairman of the Council of Governments' Transportation Planning Board. "You can do all these [transit] connections and transit-oriented development, but they all assume an adequately funded and well-managed and operated system."

None of the Washington area's new transit projects will compete for federal construction money for at least one or two years. By then, officials said, they hope government coffers that have emptied during the recession will have begun to recover.

Still, some local transportation planners say the potential effects of expanding the area's transit network create another layer of urgency to solving Metro's problems, which a recent assessment said could take three years. Most transit

construction projects seek at least 50 percent federal funding.

FTA spokesman Paul Griffo said he could not say how Metro's funding shortages might affect other projects' chances for federal approval. He said the FTA first needs "a clear understanding of who would sponsor the projects, who would be responsible for their ongoing operations and maintenance, and what state and local funding sources would cover the costs to build them -- and whether the same sources would fund" Metro.

In the case of the Purple Line, the Maryland Transit Administration would build the 16-mile light-rail line between Montgomery and Prince George's counties. Michael D. Madden, the state's Purple Line study project manager, said the state would probably operate it.

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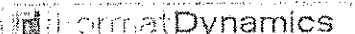
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Even if technically not a Metro line, the Purple Line would feed directly into Metro's Red, Orange and Green lines, adding to constraints such as platform crowding during rush hours. Maryland transit planners estimate that 43 percent of the Purple Line's projected 64,800 daily trips would also use Metrorail. About one-third of those trips are predicted to come from new transit riders.

Madden said an east-west Purple Line would add passengers to Metro but also help relieve some of its worst "core" congestion, because a rider traveling between suburbs would no longer have to take a long, indirect subway trip via downtown Washington.

Maryland transportation officials have said they can't afford to build the \$1.68 billion project unless the federal government pays for half. The FTA is reviewing the state's preliminary designs for the Purple Line, but officials said they won't compete for federal construction money until 2013.

This summer, Madden said, the FTA will let the state know whether the project is eligible for \$25 million in federal money to pay for half of the preliminary engineering costs. Congress would then have to appropriate the money. Congress has appropriated \$3 million toward Purple Line planning, but there is no

guarantee that more federal funding will follow, including for the most expensive construction phase, Madden said.

Madden said he has heard nothing from the FTA to signal that Metro would harm funding chances for the Purple Line.

"This is an entirely separate project," he said.

Maryland officials also plan to seek federal funding to build a 14-mile Corridor Cities Transitway between upper Montgomery County and Metro's Shady Grove Station on the Red Line. Its planning is behind that of the Purple Line.

Beverley K. Swaim-Staley, Maryland's transportation secretary, said Metro's safety and maintenance issues "are clearly something we need to handle immediately." She said she thinks that

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will happen before the Purple Line would compete for federal funding.

"I certainly hope by the time those decisions are made in a year or two that we'll be able to demonstrate we have a very good handle on [Metro's] safety issues," Swaim-Staley said.

Washington area officials said they hope that new federal transportation legislation being debated in Congress will include more money for transit. They also say they are bolstered by the Obama administration's decision to steer federal construction money toward projects that would enhance "livability," such as by generating economic development and shaping growth -- two of the Purple Line's prime objectives. Prince George's County, for example, is counting on Purple Line stations to spark redevelopment and generate jobs in older inner-Beltway communities.

Mortimer L. Downey, a recently appointed federal member of the Metro board, said that other regions have received federal money to build transit lines even as they have worked to maintain their aging subways.

"They don't say you must finish your spinach before you get your dessert," Downey said of the FTA. "You have to show you're capable of running your system and following through on [local

financial] commitments. . . . They will raise the question, but I don't think it will be a make-or-break issue for a particular project."

Several advocates of the Dulles rail project, the Silver Line, said they viewed the attention to Metro's problems during their funding battles as a political red herring raised by some Bush administration officials more concerned about the project's scope and management. Building the Silver Line from Tysons Corner to Dulles International Airport is not related to Metro's finances because the project would be funded primarily from revenue from the Dulles Toll Road and a special taxing district.

Several local officials said they hope they'll benefit from the fact that their projects might connect to the Metro system but, unlike the Dulles rail

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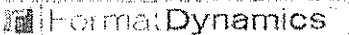
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extension, wouldn't become part of it.

Arlington Transportation Director Dennis Leach said officials are considering whether to seek federal money to build a \$165 million streetcar line along Columbia Pike between the Pentagon City Metro station and Baileys Crossroads in Fairfax County.

"I think the smaller bus rapid transit or streetcar projects aren't in the same category" as the Silver Line, Leach said. "They're smaller and don't tie as directly into Metro's operations."

D.C. transportation officials said they're not concerned about Metro affecting their chances of clinching money for a K Street Transitway or a 37-mile streetcar system. They said they plan to enter the federal funding competition in about two years. The city is using local money to begin laying streetcar tracks in Anacostia and along H Street and Benning Road in Northeast Washington.

"The FTA has not led us to believe that any of the [D.C. Department of Transportation's] transit projects would be competing for funding with Metro's regional priorities," said DDOT Director Gabe Klein.

But Robert Puentes, a transportation and urban planning expert at the Brookings Institution in Washington, said Metro's

problems are a "legitimate concern." With federal money for transit construction so tight and in such demand across the country, he said, the FTA will want proof that any systems the federal government helps pay to build will have sufficient local financial backing to operate safely.

"I don't think we should necessarily stop planning for [transit] expansion, because clearly there are a lot of needs out there," Puentes said. "But job one should be dealing with the financial problems Metro already has."

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## Will the fast trains come to Richmond?

EUGENE TRANI TIMES-DISPATCH GUEST COLUMNIST

Published: April 3, 2010

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On Jan. 28, President Barack Obama and his administration unveiled their long-awaited announcement of high-speed rail funding recipients. For the \$8 billion in available funding included in the stimulus act, more than \$57 billion worth of applications were received by the Federal Railroad Administration, including a \$1.8 billion application from Virginia to upgrade the Washington, D.C., to Richmond rail corridor.

Included in Virginia's application was a \$75 million project for 11.4 miles of new track north of Fredericksburg, including corridor preparation and additional track work around Quantico, which was "shovel ready." It was this shovel-ready project for which Virginia received high-speed rail funding.

While high-speed rail advocates are disappointed that Virginia did not receive more funding, we never expected to be fully funded and this initial \$75 million represents a first step toward the advancement of more and faster train service between Richmond and Washington. Additionally, Virginia will use \$10 million in stimulus funding to do the preliminary engineering for a passenger rail bypass around Acca Yard, between Henrico's Staples Mill station and Richmond's Main Street station.

New investments in North Carolina will increase the speed and reliability of the four roundtrip long-distance trains that serve Richmond. Furthermore, Washington, D.C., received \$2.9 million to begin the process of replacing the Long Bridge, an antiquated bridge that crosses the Potomac River and traces its origins to the mid-1850s. It is one of the largest congestion points between the Northeast and Southeast rail corridors, and badly needs replacement. The investments north and south of Richmond will improve the quality of our present train service.

It is important to remember that the overall goal of the stimulus funds was to create jobs. One of the great things about the Washington-to-Richmond corridor is that we already have a fair amount of passenger rail service, with eight round-trip trains daily and a ninth beginning this summer. Contrast this to the corridors that received more significant stimulus funding, such as the line between Orlando and

Tampa that has only one daily round-trip train; and Raleigh to Charlotte, with just two daily round-trip trains.

But the ultimate goal was to create as many jobs as possible, not just construction jobs, but also manufacturing jobs: putting people to work building the trains that will be needed to run on the tracks and, in Virginia's case, upgrading and improving our current service.

As a historian, I tend to look at things in context of the larger picture. The federal high-speed rail program was created in October of 2008, and funded in February of 2009. Essentially, we are a year into a program to build a national high-speed rail system. While we did not get as much as we had wished for out of the initial \$8 billion, there is significant funding still in the pipeline.

Congress has authorized an additional \$2.5 billion for 2010 for high-speed rail, and the president has requested \$1 billion annually for 2011-2014. Furthermore, Rep. James Oberstar, chairman of the House of Representatives Transportation Committee, has recommended \$50 billion over six years in the Surface Transportation Reauthorization legislation that is expected to move through Congress next year. Needless to say, high-speed rail is still in its infancy.

At the town hall meeting in Tampa, Fla., where President Obama and Vice President Biden announced the high-speed rail grants, Biden said that "we are making a big difference with a portion of this money - over a billion dollars of the \$8 billion -- on taking railroads, for example, from Richmond to Washington, that go 65 miles an hour . . . up to 110 miles an hour."

Biden correctly pointed out that with this kind of investment it becomes "economically reasonable" to "take a whole lot of cars off the highway," explaining that in the congested areas of I-95 it costs "\$22 million per lane to build per mile" compared with the ability to "build this railroad for less than \$2 million" per mile.

The vice president is right: High-speed rail between Washington and Richmond will take a lot of cars off our roads and will greatly improve the quality of life for our citizens, visitors, and students. It will also serve as a major catalyst for economic development of the I-95 corridor between Washington and Richmond.

But it is going to take time. Rome was not built in a day, and neither will our high-speed rail system be. That does not mean it is not worth the effort and the investment to advance it.

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*Eugene Trani is president emeritus and University Distinguished Professor of Virginia Commonwealth University and serves on the board of directors of Virginians for High Speed Rail. For more information, visit Virginians for High Speed Rail online at <http://www.vhsr.com>.*

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## Cap-and-trade fuel tax may not be used for transportation projects

Group of industry advocates, senators send letters urging authors to change rationale  
 April 6, 2010

The road and bridge industry, along with a group of senators, are pressuring those involved in cap-and-trade legislation to place any new fuel tax dollars into the Highway Trust Fund.

Several transportation reform and environmental groups sent a letter to Sens. John Kerry (D-Mass.), Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.) and Joe Lieberman (I-Conn.) urging the clean-air promoters to "develop a proposal for climate and energy legislation that retains the long-standing principle of dedicating revenues derived from transportation motor fuels to improving the nation's highway and transportation systems." The American Association of State Highway & Transportation Officials (AASHTO), the American Road & Transportation Builders Association (ARTBA), the American Traffic Safety Services Association (ATSSA), the American Concrete Pavement Association (ACPA) and the National Asphalt Pavement Association (NAPA) were among those who signed the letter.

The move was a follow up to the letter sent by Sens. Tom Carper (D-Del.) and Arlene Specter (D-Pa.). Both have co-authored a bill called CLEAN-TEA and reminded Kerry, Graham and Lieberman that the U.S. DOT has estimated that \$30 billion more per year is needed just to maintain the nation's infrastructure system. Six other senators signed the letter.

"We are very concerned that, in addition to realizing insufficient transportation emissions reductions, your legislation may not invest revenue generated from the transportation sector into our crumbling infrastructure," said the Congressional group.

Graham has suggested using proceeds from the new fuel tax created by cap-and-trade to rebate consumers instead of putting it back into the road and bridge network.

Source: *Streetsblog Capital Hill* April 6, 2010

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## ARTBA tells Senate panel new highway bill will save lives

Improved roadway design, construction and operation can help reduce 40,000 preventable deaths  
April 14, 2010

Prioritizing investments in improved roadway design, construction and operation can help reduce 40,000 preventable deaths and should be a top priority for Congress as it continues working on passage of a multiyear surface transportation program, the American Road & Transportation Builders Association (ARTBA) told a Senate panel April 14.

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, on average more than 41,000 people have died annually on America's roadways over the past decade. One key factor jeopardizing travelers is the inadequate capacity in our basic roadway infrastructure. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, since 1982 the U.S. population has grown 31%. During that same period, vehicle miles of travel rose by 86%; yet, total U.S. road capacity (as measured by lane miles) has increased by only 6%. More cars crowded together on roadways frustrate drivers into minimizing following distances and adopting more aggressive driving styles, ARTBA said in testimony submitted at a Senate Environment & Public Works Committee hearing.

ARTBA told senators the nation's goal should be to develop a "zero-fatality" roadway infrastructure environment, but that it will require new thinking. To date, U.S. transportation policy accepts the fact that we have an imperfect system and we try to reduce the unsafe consequences of that system.

"Our policy should seek to develop a transportation system that contains zero predictable crashes with severe consequences, beginning with the major networks and following with all other roadways to the extent practicable," the association said.

This vision, ARTBA noted, will require a paradigm shift on two parallel tracks:

- The focus of reducing incidents on America's transportation system must be viewed as reducing severity of injuries as opposed to reducing the number of crashes; and
  - The policy anticipates user errors and emphasizes design, construction and maintenance of a system that will be "forgiving" of errant behavior.
- While the zero-fatality goal may take years to achieve, ARTBA said there are more immediate steps that can be taken in the new authorization bill, including:
- Dedicated funding/performance standards;
  - Work-zone safety;
  - Passenger/commercial motor vehicle separation;
  - Designing and operating roadways to meet the needs of older drivers;
  - States should be free to utilize innovative methods, or equipment that could improve safety, reduce congestion or increase the quality and durability of highways; and
  - Increasing investment levels of research programs and promoting development and implementation of new technologies will significantly reduce the number and severity of crashes in a cost-effective manner.

Source: ARTBA April 14, 2010

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### **Two Cities Exploring ‘Innovative Transport Financing’ For New Rail Lines**

by [Elana Schor](#) on April 14, 2010

The House transportation committee is holding a hearing today on "innovative financing" for infrastructure projects -- a topic near and dear to lawmakers who continue to hunt for a politically feasible, sustainable strategy for funding a new six-year federal transport bill.



partnership

could be the ticket to a new expansion. (Photo:

[JCWinnie.biz](#))

Meanwhile, in the Denver and Dallas metro areas, planners are edging toward public-private partnership agreements to pay for new rail lines, a prospect all but ruled out in a November analysis by the Government Accountability Office that cast significant doubt on the potential for private-sector transit funding.

Denver officials hope to accomplish the tricky feat of wooing private capital to transit by executing a deal directing sales-tax revenue to the winning bidder, which would provide immediate financing and collect operating profits. From yesterday's [Dow Jones report](#):

Denver's transit agency hopes to skirt the dilemma by using a portion of its dedicated sales-tax revenue to essentially lease the completed rail lines, vehicles and maintenance facility from the winning investment group under a 40-year agreement, in exchange for the up-front investment and ongoing operation.

If the plan comes to fruition, the agency will maintain ownership of the project and control over fares, but provide the investors with a profitable, long-term revenue stream. ...

The arrangement, known as "availability financing," is relatively commonplace in Europe but has been used only rarely in the U.S., where privatization of public infrastructure and services in general has been much slower to catch on.

In Dallas, the local transit agency is weighing a plan to expedite construction of a new rail line with no upfront contribution from the public. The proposed link between Fort Worth and Wylie, Texas, known as the "Cotton Belt," would be paid for using "value capture" taxation methods that aim to harness the economic benefits of rail for local businesses.

But as the Dallas Morning News [noted last week](#), the new financing pitch "would most likely include much steeper fares for the Cotton Belt [and] paid parking." From Michael Lindenberger's local report on the transit expansion:

Dallas City Council member Ron Natinsky urged colleagues to embrace the idea, and said he was ready to vote Thursday.

"There is no downside here," he said. "This simply says we're going to solicit bids. Those bids have to be returned, and if they aren't to our liking, we can turn them down. And we're no worse off than we are now."

No matter who is in charge of negotiating the deal, a privately financed rail line will represent a seismic shift in how passenger rail is built in Texas, just as Gov. Rick Perry's pursuit of privatized toll roads has transformed the way those roads are paid for.

As with toll road deals, private partners who invest in rail lines would insist that every service decision – from ticket costs, to station locations, to schedules and parking fees – be examined with an eye on how much revenue they could produce.

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**April 19, 2010**

## **Va. audits transportation funding**

Gov. Bob McDonnell has commissioned four independent audits to determine the status of Virginia's various transportation programs.

The governor says the audits are to determine if the state is using the best practices to address transportation issues.

McDonnell says the audits will look at planning, maintenance, research and public-private projects.

The audits are expected to cost less than \$500,000, unless additional work is necessary.

McDonnell's office did not say when the audits are to be completed.

-- *Associated Press*

By Michael Bolden | April 19, 2010; 11:58 AM ET

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