

PB Washington Update - Interim Report - August 5, 2011

This morning the Senate, which left town on Monday evening for its August break, but never officially adjourned, agreed by Unanimous Consent (UC) to the House-passed version of the short-term FAA authorization bill. The bill will now be sent to President Obama to sign, which he is expected to do. The good news is that furloughed FAA employees can go back to work, although it is not certain they will be paid retroactively for the two weeks they were off the job, and hundreds of AIP-funded construction projects can get back on track. It is unclear if anything can be done to restore the millions in lost revenues to the Aviation Trust Fund while the ticket tax went uncollected. The bad news is that the short-term extension only runs through September 16, not long after Congress returns on September 7 from its August break. There are still a number of issues holding up passage of a multi-year bill and House T&I Committee Chairman John Mica (R-FL) is threatening to attach other controversial provisions to future short-term extension bills in an effort to force the Senate to compromise on the longer-term bill.

The Senate finally agreed to pass the House extension bill after it was determined that US DOT Secretary LaHood has the authority to administratively waive the House-passed cuts to Essential Air Service (EAS) subsidies for certain small, rural airports.