

Durbin and Duckworth highlight priorities for fiscal year funding bill

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WASHINGTON – U.S. Senators Dick Durbin (D-IL), a member of the Senate Appropriations Committee, and Tammy Duckworth (D-IL) applauded the inclusion of several of their priorities for Illinois in the Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies (THUD) fiscal year 2019 funding bill. The bill was passed out of the Senate Appropriations Committee and now heads to the Senate floor for consideration. Illinois priorities in the bill include funding for Core Capacity grants, Amtrak, and TIGER grants, includes report language addressing the housing crisis in Cairo and Thebes, Illinois, and includes report language directing the Government Accountability Office (GAO) to conduct a study to identify causes and potential solutions to Amtrak’s poor on-time performance.

“This federal funding will create good paying jobs, improve safety and reliability for those moving goods in and out of Illinois, and continue to expand businesses across the state. It will also give local development agencies across Illinois the ability to offer affordable housing and homeless assistance to the people who need it most,” said Durbin. **“Thankfully, this bill ignored President Trump’s proposed budget, which slashed transportation and affordable housing investments. I will keep working with Senator Duckworth to ensure that our state’s communities have access to the critical federal investments that drive economic growth and look forward to seeing this bill across the finish line.”**

“These investments will help move our state’s economy in the right direction, improve our transportation systems and create jobs for hardworking Illinoisans,” Duckworth said. **“This federal support is critical in ensuring that Illinois can provide quality affordable housing, reliable transit and modern infrastructure. I am committed to working with Senator Durbin and my colleagues in the Senate to move this bill forward and bring these dollars home.”**

This Committee-passed legislation includes the following Durbin-Duckworth priorities:

Department of Transportation

- **TIGER (now “BUILD”) Grants:** \$1 billion in nationwide funding, Illinois has been a major beneficiary of the TIGER grant program, receiving more than \$344 million to support critical transportation infrastructure projects since 2009.
- **Amtrak:** \$1.941 billion in nationwide funding, and includes report language directing the Government Accountability Office (GAO) to conduct a study to identify causes and potential solutions to Amtrak’s poor on-time performance.
- **Transit Grants:** \$2.552 billion in nationwide funding, and includes report language directing the Secretary of Transportation to continue advancing eligible Capital Investment Grant (CIG) projects through the pipeline and forcing DOT to allocate current funding.
- **Core Capacity:** \$543.5 million in nationwide funding, and includes full funding for the Chicago Transit Authority’s (CTA) Red & Purple Line Modernization Program. Durbin created this competitive grant program as part of the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP-21).
- **Passenger Rail Grant Programs:** These rail infrastructure and safety improvement programs include funding for positive train control implementation, rail line relocation, and grade crossing enhancements.
 - \$255 million in nationwide funding for the Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements (CRISI) program, and report language making commuter railroads eligible for this funding and allowing Metra to use this grant funding to reimburse previous work done to implement positive train control safety technology.
 - \$300 million in nationwide funding for the Federal-State Partnership for State of Good Repair program.
 - \$10 million in nationwide funding for the Restoration and Enhancements Grants program.
- **Airport Improvement Funding (AIP):** \$4.1 billion in nationwide grant funding for capital improvements at airports, and includes report language directing the FAA to consider air cargo needs when allocating grants and urging the FAA to allocate AIP funds faster to northern airports to account for the shorter construction seasons due to winter weather. Also includes report language directing DOT to explore expanding the Transportation Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (TIFIA) credit program for airport projects.

- **Essential Air Service (EAS):** \$175 million in nationwide funding, which supports air service in Quincy, Decatur, and Marion, Illinois.
- **University Rail Research Initiative:** \$5 million in Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) research funding to support new rail-related research at universities around the country.
- **Crude By Rail:** \$58 million in hazardous materials safety funding and \$28 million in emergency preparedness grants. It also includes report language directing the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA) to require comprehensive oil spill response plans by rail carriers; directing PHMSA to work with the industry to accelerate the phase-out of older, less safe tanker cars; and directing PHMSA to require railroads transporting hazardous materials to share accurate, real-time information with emergency responders.
- **Airplane Noise:** Report language included directing FAA to improve flight procedures to reduce impact of airplane noise on local communities; to prioritize research on the health effects of airplane noise; and to evaluate alternative metrics to address community noise concerns.
- **Formula Funds:** Transportation formula programs in the bill will provide the following funding for Illinois:
 - \$86,548,939 in highway formula funding;
 - \$24,865,919 in bridge formula funding;
 - \$4,182,178 for railway-highway crossings funding;
 - \$36,781,985 in State of Good Repair transit formula funding;
 - \$7,740,563 in Bus and Bus Facilities formula funding.

Department of Housing and Urban Development

- **Alexander County Housing Authority:** Report language successfully included to:
 - Direct HUD to ensure residents' access to mobility and relocation specialists until they are successfully relocated;
 - Direct HUD to ensure that prior to a public housing authority exiting HUD receivership, there is a plan in place to ensure tenants who are being involuntarily relocated secure decent and safe housing;
 - Direct HUD to issue clarifying guidance to ensure residents relocating using a tenant protection voucher do not face additional barriers to relocation;

- Direct HUD to review its procedure for processing public housing disposition requests to identify ways to expedite HUD assistance for tenants living in unsafe and unsanitary conditions;
 - Direct HUD to remind public housing authorities of their responsibility to work in coordination with state housing finance agencies and regional stakeholders to identify opportunities for the expansion of local housing inventory in areas where there is a known low vacancy or where public housing is being demolished; and,
 - Clarify the Office of Receivership Oversight as the lead office responsible for the effective management and oversight of public housing authorities under receivership to ensure public housing authorities benefit from HUD's technical and programmatic expertise.
- **Lead Hazard Control and Healthy Homes:** \$260 million in nationwide funding for this program, which provides annual grants to states and local units of government to help control lead-based paint hazards in low-income homes with children.
 - **Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS (HOPWA):** \$375 million in nationwide funding to provide housing assistance and related supportive services to local units of government, States, and non-profit organizations for projects that benefit low-income persons medically diagnosed with HIV/AIDS and their families.
 - **Community Development Block Grant (CDBG):** \$3.3 billion in nationwide funding, a program the President's budget proposed eliminating. The CDBG program provides annual grants to states and local units of government to develop viable urban communities by providing decent housing and a suitable living environment, and by expanding economic opportunities, principally for low- and moderate-income individuals.
 - **Home Investment Partnerships Program (HOME):** \$1.362 billion in nationwide funding, a program the President's budget proposed eliminating. The HOME program helps to expand the supply of decent, affordable housing to low- and very low-income families by providing grants to states and local governments to fund housing programs that meet local needs and priorities.