

New Transportation Funding Bill Is Good News For Floriculture Industry

Posted By: Brian Sparks^[1] January 11, 2016



On December 3, Congress passed a five-year, \$305 billion transportation bill, the Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act. According to AmericanHort, the passage of the bill ended a decade of stopgap funding that has negatively affected roads, bridges, and transit planning across the country. The final bill, the longest funding plan that has been approved in 17 years, passed the U.S. House of Representatives, 359-65, and the Senate, 83-16. President Obama signed the 1,300-page bill into law shortly after.

So what does the bill's passage mean for the floriculture industry? According to Craig Regelbrugge, Senior Vice President for industry advocacy and research at AmericanHort, there are a couple of basic benefits.

"In a general sense, having a stable, multi-year plan approved for transportation funding brings certainty," Regelbrugge says. "For an industry that moves its product on trucks, and uses trucks in many other ways, transportation improvements that reduce delays and improve efficiencies positively impact the bottom line. And, infrastructure investments often have a landscape or bioremediation component that adds to demand for our products and services."

Perhaps more importantly, however, Regelbrugge says the industry managed to dodge a bullet.

"In the debate, a Missouri congresswoman offered an amendment^[2] to prohibit the use of federal funds for vegetative enhancements, including landscaping," says Regelbrugge. "She and others who supported it wrongly see landscaping as beautification and therefore non-essential. They overlook that landscapes offer crucial ecosystem services. They filter air and water, reduce noise and urban heat island effects, and more.

"We successfully fought to defeat the amendment, but the fact that two-thirds of Republicans supported it means there's a lot more education to do," Regelbrugge says. "However, a positive bipartisan amendment to encourage the use of transportation corridors to expand pollinator habitat and forage made it into the final package."

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