



Memorandum

To: Board of Directors

From: Debbie Hale, Executive Director

Meeting Date: February 28, 2018

Subject: **American Public Works Association Government Affairs Committee Meeting in Washington, DC**

During the first week in February, I participated in the American Public Works Association's annual Government Affairs Committee meeting in Washington, DC. The trip provided an opportunity to meet with our Congressman and his DC staff, as well as brief the transportation staff for Senators Feinstein and Harris on our top priorities.

The committee meeting included discussions with the Army Corps of Engineers, the Federal Highway Administration, the Federal Emergency Management Agency and the US Environmental Protection Agency. On our second day, we met with various transportation and infrastructure funding committees on Capitol Hill.

Our goal in these meetings was to encourage a meaningful infrastructure program with new funding, reward the states and local agencies who have already raised their own revenues, and streamline the project delivery process.

One key takeaway was that there is a strong push for reducing regulations and most of the agencies we talked to are looking at their processes to see where they can make changes. It remains to be seen how meaningful these changes will be and whether legislation is needed to, for instance, keep a project with less than 10% federal funding from having to comply with all the federal requirements. There was extensive discussion, for instance, with FEMA about concerns with "claw-backs" of federal money because certain paperwork requirements were not met.

Another issue that was widely discussed with Congressional representatives was whether or not earmarks will return. We expressed support for Congressional earmarks, as our region received substantial funding for the US 101 Prunedale Improvement project, the US 101 Airport Boulevard interchange, the State Route 156 improvements and the Monterey Bay Sanctuary Scenic Trail. By contrast, under the current "TIGER" grant program, in which projects are selected by the Administration, no one in the three Monterey Bay county region has received any funding since its adoption over 5 years ago.

The timing of our meetings was fortuitous in that the draft Trump Infrastructure proposal was released the Friday before our visit. The final proposal did not appear to differ much

from the draft, and we were able to voice our opinion on the strengths and weaknesses of the proposal. The chief concerns of the public works representatives from throughout the country (and across the political spectrum) were that the proposed Infrastructure Plan:

- Provides no new money but just cuts other programs to fund the new grants;
- Creates a complicated, new competitive grant program for “transformative projects” rather than flowing funds through existing formulas that reach all states and regions to meet basic infrastructure needs;
- Reverses the federal match ratio from 80% federal/20% local to 20% federal/80% local; and,
- Focuses on leveraging “new money” but gives little credit to regions and states that have already raised taxes or fees to pay for new infrastructure.

The Infrastructure Plan does discuss support for streamlining the project delivery process, which all committee members supported. TAMC staff will work with our other self-help transportation partners to include provisions to allow the California Environmental Quality Act to substitute for the National Environmental Policy Act, rather than continue the current duplicative environmental review and documentation process.

The APWA Government Affairs committee meeting provided a cost-effective way for TAMC staff to conduct our annual visit to Washington, DC (APWA paid for most of the trip) with the added benefit of expanding our influence across a coalition of public works professionals representing districts throughout the country.