



International Right of Way Association Weekly Update

Monday, May 6, 2019

Trump Administration

- Last week President Trump, Speaker Pelosi, Senate Minority Leader Schumer, and other congressional Democrat leaders met to discuss infrastructure. They agreed that \$2 trillion in federal infrastructure investment was the target for comprehensive infrastructure legislation. A follow-up meeting will occur at the end of this month to continue the conversation.

Congress

- Both Chambers are in session this week.
- The House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee held a “Members’ Day” hearing on Wednesday where Members of Congress had an opportunity to testify about their infrastructure ideas and priorities. A video and testimony from the hearing is available here: <https://transportation.house.gov/committee-activity/hearings/full-committee-hearing-committee-on-transportation-and-infrastructure-members-day-hearing>
- Senator Portman chaired a hearing on Wednesday focused on the federal permitting dashboard created in the FAST Act (known as “FAST 41”). Alex Herrgott, the Executive Director of the Federal Permitting Improvement Steering Council, testified along with representatives from stakeholders and interest groups.
<https://www.hsgac.senate.gov/subcommittees/investigations/hearings/oversight-of-federal-infrastructure-permitting-and-fast-41>

Analysis

- As noted in last week’s update, the meeting at the White House could have ended the possibility of comprehensive infrastructure legislation if it went poorly. That did not happen and the President and congressional Democrat leaders agreed to target \$2 trillion in additional federal investment. The major hurdle of how to fund such an ambitious package remains unresolved, however. There will be another meeting later this month to focus on the funding/revenue issue.
- While the initial news from the meeting seemed incredibly positive—which it was—it is important to consider this meeting in the following context:

- Pelosi and Schumer are framing the funding issue as the responsibility of the President to solve. In their joint statement after the meeting they said that at the next meeting, “we will hear the President’s ideas for how he would pay for” the infrastructure package. Schumer was also quoted after the meeting stating that “unless he is willing to come up with the pay-fors for this large package, it will never get done.” Remember that the President has indicated support for a gas-tax increase in the past, which Schumer has opposed. This funding issue is the most difficult issue to navigate, politically, and the easiest place for this to unravel.
- Any agreement between the President and congressional Democrats is meaningless without the support of Senate Republicans, none of whom attended the meeting at the White House. Senator John Thune (R-SD) stated after the meeting that any package must be fully paid-for, and Senate Majority Leader McConnell stated that any roll-back of the tax cuts enacted in 2017 as a way to pay for the package is off the table.