



International Right of Way Association Weekly Update

Monday, May 20, 2019

Trump Administration

- The President will meet on Wednesday with Speaker Pelosi and Senate Minority Leader Schumer for their follow-up discussion on infrastructure. The purpose of this meeting is to discuss ways to pay for a \$2 trillion infrastructure package.

Congress

- Both Chambers are in session this week.
- The top Republican and Democrat from both Chambers—collectively, the “big four”—will meet this week to begin discussing a budget resolution that would, if passed by both Chambers, set spending levels for fiscal year 2020 appropriations. Negotiations over raising the debt ceiling will also be part of this discussion.
<https://www.politico.com/story/2019/05/17/congress-budget-talks-1330210>

Analysis

- While this past week was the “official” infrastructure week, the myriad events and speeches did not yield any newsworthy developments. All eyes will be on the President’s meeting with Pelosi and Schumer this week, however. As we noted previously, the first meeting could have killed any prospect of comprehensive infrastructure legislation advancing this year. That did not happen, and the parties agreed to target a \$2 trillion infrastructure investment. These leaders will meet again on Wednesday to discuss the true issue, which is how to pay for such an ambitious package.
- It is optimistic to assume that the meeting will result in both sides agreeing to \$2 trillion in offsets to pay for an infrastructure package, but if the parties make any progress towards identifying actual “pay-fors” and stay at the proverbial negotiating table, infrastructure advocates should count that as a success. Both sides want to a win on infrastructure so they can carry that message into campaign season. But if Congress is to raise \$2 trillion for infrastructure, politics will dictate that Congress and the White House be united and committed to the approach. Unless and until there is a commitment to unity on the funding issue, the opportunity for political sniping and for one side to criticize the other will be too great for progress to occur.
- The other important meeting this week comes as bipartisan leaders of both Chambers meet to discuss a budget resolution that will set top-line spending levels for fiscal year

2020. Advancing a budget resolution will allow Congress to raise the spending caps and direct federal funding to those areas of priority. In the absence of comprehensive infrastructure legislation, Congress has used the appropriations process over the last two years to spend \$20 billion in additional federal funds on infrastructure over baseline spending levels.