



Amendments to H.R. 2577—Fiscal Year 2016 Transportation, Housing and Urban Development Appropriations (Diaz-Balart, R-FL) – Part I

CONTACT: MATT DICKERSON, MATTHEW.DICKERSON@MAIL.HOUSE.GOV, 6-9718

The committee report can be found [here](#), and the text of the legislation can be found [here](#).

AMENDMENTS WITH REQUESTED VOTES:

1. **McClintock (R-CA)**: Would eliminate funding for the [Essential Air Service \(EAS\)](#). This program provides federal subsidies to air carriers for providing service to about 160 small airports (43 in Alaska alone), often at a cost of several hundred dollars per passenger (average subsidy in FY13 was \$655 per passenger). Past House THUD bill have capped the per-passenger subsidy at \$500 per passenger, but this bill does not include any subsidy caps.

The bill would provide EAS \$155 million, a level that is \$20 million below the president’s budget request and equal to the FY15 enacted level. EAS also receives \$100 million in mandatory funding, for a total funding level of \$249 million.

The [House Republican Budget](#) recommended phasing out the EAS. The [RSC’s budget](#) calls for eliminating EAS, explaining “the federal government should not be borrowing money to provide air service to areas of the country where the market will not support it.” Several conservative organizations support eliminating EAS, including [Cato](#), [Citizens Against Government Waste](#), [FreedomWorks](#), [Heritage Action](#), and [National Taxpayers Union](#). Recent media reports have highlighted [nearly empty flights on taxpayers’ dime](#).

2. **Walberg (R-MI)**: Would strike section 102 of the bill, which would authorize the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) to lobby states to enact mandatory motorcycle helmet laws. Congress originally prohibited NHTSA from these activities in 1998.

The amendment is supported by the American Motorcyclist Association and the Motorcycle Riders Foundation. A similar amendment to the FY15 THUD bill was adopted by a voice vote.

3. **Esty (D-CT)**: Would increase the Federal Railroad Administration Safety and Operations account by \$3 million and would reduce the FAA Operations account by the same amount.
4. **Cartwright (D-PA)**: Would strike section 134 of the bill which would prohibit funds from being used to finalize proposed regulations that would increase the federally mandated levels of minimum financial responsibility coverage for truckers from \$750,000 to \$4.5 million.

According to trucking industry, more than 90 percent of carriers have well over the minimum level of required coverage and the average level of damage in a truck-involved crash is about \$18,000.

An industry letter in support of this provision and in opposition to the proposed regulations can be found [here](#).

5. **[Garrett \(R-NJ\)](#)**: Would increase Federal Railroad Administration Safety and Operations by \$16.9 million and would decrease Transit New Starts (Capital Investment Grants) by \$83 million.

The FRA would be appropriated \$187 million for safety and operations, a level that is \$17 million below the president's budget request and equal to the FY15 enacted level. The amendment would bring the FRA up to the president's budget request level.

New Starts would be appropriated \$1.921 billion, a level that is \$1.329 billion below the president's budget request and \$199 million below the FY15 enacted level. The [New Starts](#) program provides funds for the construction of local fixed-guideway public transportation systems. Often this program funds streetcar systems, such as the H Street Streetcar [boondoggle](#) in Washington, D.C. Much like other discretionary (non-formula) programs, projects are selected by the administration often for political purposes. The program "[gives transit agencies](#) incentives to choose high-cost" systems instead of more cost-effective options and "[to get as much](#) New Starts money as possible, transit agencies have planned increasingly expensive rail projects". In 2010, the Obama administration "[scrapped](#) a George W. Bush-era rule that had weighed funding decisions most heavily on whether transportation projects were cost-effective and would reduce commuting time." Several outside groups support eliminating New Starts, including [Heritage](#), and [Cato](#).

6. **[Brooks \(R-AL\)](#)**: Would eliminate Amtrak Operating subsidies. This would save \$289 million.

The bill would provide Amtrak a total of \$1.138 billion in subsidies. Taxpayers have provided more than \$44 billion in subsidies to Amtrak since it was created by Congress in 1970, despite the fact it is "[legally a for-profit company](#)". The railroad service is notoriously a poor fiscal manager, losing \$60 million on food and beverage service alone in 2015.

The [House Republican Budget](#) recommended eliminating Amtrak's operating subsidies. The [RSC's budget](#) calls for the elimination of Amtrak funding, stating that "Amtrak has no incentive to improve its performance if it knows that it will be able to count on the taxpayers for a bailout each year. The federal government should not force the taxpayers to subsidize Amtrak, which should be privatized." Several conservative groups have supported ending subsidies for Amtrak, including [Americans for Prosperity](#), [Americans for Tax Reform](#), [Cato](#), [Citizens Against Government Waste](#), [Competitive Enterprise Institute](#), [FreedomWorks](#), [Heritage](#), [Mercatus](#), and [National Taxpayers Union](#).

7. **[Brooks \(R-AL\)](#)**: Would eliminate Amtrak Capital and Debt Service subsidies. This would save \$850 million.

The bill would provide Amtrak a total of \$1.138 billion in subsidies. Taxpayers have provided more than \$44 billion in subsidies to Amtrak since it was created by Congress in 1970, despite the fact it is "[legally a for-profit company](#)". The railroad service is notoriously a poor fiscal manager, losing \$60 million on food and beverage service alone in 2015.

The [House Republican Budget](#) recommended eliminating Amtrak's operating subsidies. The [RSC's](#)

[budget](#) calls for the elimination of Amtrak funding, stating that “Amtrak has no incentive to improve its performance if it knows that it will be able to count on the taxpayers for a bailout each year. The federal government should not force the taxpayers to subsidize Amtrak, which should be privatized.” Several conservative groups have supported ending subsidies for Amtrak, including [Americans for Prosperity](#), [Americans for Tax Reform](#), [Cato](#), [Citizens Against Government Waste](#), [Competitive Enterprise Institute](#), [FreedomWorks](#), [Heritage](#), [Mercatus](#), and [National Taxpayers Union](#).

8. **[Capps \(D-CA\)](#)**: Would increase funding for Pipeline Safety out of the Pipeline Safety Fund by \$27.6 million.

This increase would be funded by an increase in oil company user fees paid into the Pipeline Safety Fund.

9. **[Stivers \(R-OH\)](#)**: Would prohibit funds from being used for the [Private Enforcement Initiative](#) of the Fair Housing Initiatives Program. The Private Enforcement Initiative provides federal grants to non-profit organizations “for testing and enforcement activities to prevent or eliminate discriminatory housing practices.”

A [HUD Inspector General report](#) found several projects with this program including finding that “HUD Did Not Complete Onsite Monitoring for \$10.2 Million in Enforcement Grants,” “HUD did not consistently issue monitoring letters according to policy,” “HUD did not monitor conflict-of-interest provisions,” and that “HUD staff did not follow onsite monitoring policy.”

NOTE: *RSC Legislative Bulletins are for informational purposes only and should not be taken as statements of support or opposition from the Republican Study Committee.*

###