



SCENIC ACTION NETWORK

update

September 26, 1997

ISTEA: KEEPING THE PRESSURE ON

The ISTEA (Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act) reauthorization debate in Congress is now well under way with some good news for scenic advocates. All that hard work to protect the *Scenic Byways, Enhancements and CMAQ* (Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality) Programs has clearly paid off, in no small part thanks to the transportation policy coalition who stuck together and to our Scenic America members who tirelessly called and wrote their members of Congress.

On the next page there is a summary of the transportation bills in the House (BESTEA) and Senate (ISTEA II). You will be happy to see that both bills would make Scenic Byways a permanent program, that many provisions we worked for were included, and that there is increased funding for the programs we hoped to protect. The problem is that while the Senate floor debate is next week, the House bill is being put off for another six months.

SIX YEAR BILL IN SENATE, SIX MONTH BILL IN HOUSE

The original three year House transportation bill, the Building Efficient Surface Transportation and Equity Act (BESTEA) proposed in early September, would have broken the budget agreement by allocating more money to transportation than agreed on by Congress earlier this year.

As a result, opposition arose to the House bill and the House Committee drafted a new six year bill. In the meanwhile, the Committee adopted a six month extension of the old 1991 ISTEA, to allow time for debate of this new six year bill, still known as BESTEA.

The six month extension could leave all our hard won provisions open to attack again. Despite the current strong support for programs like *Enhancements* and *Scenic Byways* these provisions may come under threat as the Senate and House try to resolve their differences.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

We need you to get the message to your members of Congress over the *next few days and weeks* that the new ISTEA must protect the Scenic Byways, Enhancements and CMAQ programs.

Your message:

You are a constituent and voter. Thank them for writing strong Scenic Byways, Enhancements and CMAQ provisions in their bills and urge them not to allow any weakening of these provisions in the House and Senate. Tell them you are counting on their continued support when the Senate and House bills are considered together.

ADDRESSES AND PHONE NUMBERS

Members of the House of Representatives:

The Honorable _____

U.S. House of Representatives

Washington, DC 20515

Members of the Senate:

The Honorable _____

U.S. Senate

Washington, DC 20510

The phone number of the Capitol switchboard, which can connect you to any member's office: (202) 224-3121

Summary of Current Legislation for ISTEA Renewal in the House and Senate

Provision	House Bill: BESTEA, HR 2400	Senate Bill: ISTEA II, S.1173
Temporary Bill	Six month extension of current ISTEA	No equivalent bill or extension
Main Bill	Six year authorization	Six year authorization
Overall Funding	\$103.2 billion (average \$34 billion/year) for first 3 years with increased funding for each of the last 3 yrs.	\$145 billion (\$24 billion/year)
<u>Scenic Byways:</u>		
1) Funding	\$90 million: \$30 million each year for first 3 years; undetermined for last 3 years	\$116 million: average funding \$19.3 million/year for 6 years
2) Status of Program	Makes program permanent	Makes program permanent
3) Designation: National Scenic Byways and All American Roads	Specifies that a road must be designated a state scenic byway prior to national scenic byway designation	Same
4) State Scenic Byway Programs	Funding priority given to funding states to establish their own scenic byways program	Same
5) State Scenic Byway Programs	Specifies that funds may be used for Corridor Management Plans (study period) for scenic byways	Same / also specifies funds may be used for the protection of "scenic resources"
6) Billboard Removal Eligibility for Funds	Removes 10% limit on funds that can be used for billboard removal	Same
7) National Scenic Byways Center	Creates national center to coordinate scenic byways information, with \$1,500,00 annual funding	Not addressed
<u>Enhancements:</u>		
1) Funding	10% of surface transportation funds: \$700 million/year (previously \$400 million/year) <i>but</i> 50% of funds above FY96 may be "flexed" for other uses	8% of surface transportation funds: about \$560 million/year (\$160 million more than under ISTEA)
2) New Enhancements Categories	Funds mass transit oriented enhancements at 2% of funds apportioned to urban areas with population greater than 200,000	Not addressed
3) Flexible Funding in Enhancements	<i>Flexible funding provision:</i> States may flex 50% of their new enhancements funding to other programs	Not addressed
<u>CMAQ</u>	Preserved	Preserved/ Increased funding
What to Watch Out For.....	<i>New funds for high risk road safety improvement:</i> Funds the improvement of roads for safety: May lead to unnecessary road widening on smaller federal-aid roads	Not addressed
	Amendment to make road widening eligible for CMAQ funds.	Same threat