

Transportation bill allocates \$26 billion to Calif.

By Carolyn Lochhead, San Francisco Chronicle

WASHINGTON – Congress has agreed for the first time since 2005 on a long-term transportation bill that will raise federal spending on highways by 5 percent and transit by 8 percent in its first year. Over the bill's five-year life, California will get \$26 billion in federal funds for a variety of transportation projects, a 14.5 percent increase.

Retiring Sen. Barbara Boxer, a California Democrat who joined hands with conservative Sen. James Inhofe, R-Oklahoma, in a monthslong drive to break through conservative antipathy in the House to increasing government spending on domestic programs, counted the legislation as a major achievement when it was announced late Tuesday.

The bill lacks a sustainable funding source, all but ensuring that when it expires in five years, the funding deficit that has allowed roads, bridges and transit systems to deteriorate for years will be even worse. Instead of securing a stable source of dedicated revenue, congressional negotiators scoured the budget for obscure alternatives, from raiding the Federal Reserve's cushion against bank losses to revoking the passports of citizens behind on their taxes by \$50,000 or more in an effort to get them to pay up.

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