PROPOSED HOUSE RULES CHANGE THREATENS GUARANTEED FUNDING FOR TRANSIT – APTA MEMBERS URGED TO CONTACT HOUSE MEMBERS TO OPPOSE NEW RULE FOR TRANSPORTATION SPENDING

As Republicans prepare to assume the leadership of the U.S. House of Representatives later this week, House party leaders have developed a package of proposed amendments to House Rules that could impact the future of transportation spending.

Under a current House rule, members may not offer a bill, joint resolution, amendment or conference report that reduces spending levels for highway, highway safety, and public transportation below the funding amounts that are specified in authorization law (in this case, extensions of SAFETEA-LU). This rule holds regardless of the source of the revenues that support those spending levels.

In the House Rules package for the 112th Congress, Republicans propose to change the current rule. The change would eliminate the provision in House Rules which requires appropriations funding for highways and transit to be identical to levels set in authorizing law. This would create opportunities to use user fee and transit general fund resources for non-transportation purposes. For example, the new rule would allow members to offer amendments to direct highway and transit resources to other purposes, such as deficit reduction.

Adoption of the new rule could endanger future levels of funding for public transportation programs by eliminating the current guarantee that ensures that user fees deposited into the Mass Transit Account of the Highway Trust Fund (HTF) are used for transit purposes. The guarantee was put in place in 1998 to end abuses of the trust fund, and has resulted in almost 100 percent of funds authorized for transit programs being appropriated on an annual basis.

It is critical that APTA members contact Republican Members of the U.S. House of Representatives today, and urge them to oppose this change to the House Rules.

Action Alert

Members should urge the following:

• Ask members to contact U.S. House Speaker John Boehner (R-OH) and Majority Leader Eric Cantor (R-VA) and urge them to drop the proposed changes to the rules regarding the Highway Trust Fund from the final package.

• Explain to your Member of Congress that this rules package is not the appropriate vehicle to make fundamental changes to the federal transportation policy. Any policy changes should be debated during consideration of the surface transportation authorization bill which sets funding levels and policy for federal surface transportation programs.

• Explain to your Member that should the proposed rule change move forward, it could seriously reduce the level of transportation funds that are available to their district by diverting dedicated user fees to other non-transportation uses.

• Also explain that the change would create substantial uncertainty for states, communities, businesses and their employees that count on the stability that guaranteed HTF funding creates for long term planning.

APTA members should call the Capitol switchboard at (202) 225-3121, and ask to speak to your specific Republican member of the U.S. House of Representatives today.