

Provides rural Oregon counties with needed breathing room

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WASHINGTON, DC –Today, Rep. Peter DeFazio (D-OR) announced that a temporary one-year extension of vital Secure Rural Schools Payments will be included in a final surface transportation conference bill. DeFazio has been involved in the joint House-Senate negotiations over a two-year surface transportation bill and successfully fought to include the temporary extension of county payments for Oregon counties.

“Recent county budget cuts have forced painful layoffs, eliminated jail beds releasing inmates early, and limited county sheriff’s ability to respond to rural emergencies. This temporary extension will provide much needed breathing room for forested communities in Oregon that are quickly approaching financial disaster.

“Ultimately our counties and rural communities need a long term solution – and this extension gives us the time we need to pass comprehensive federal legislation. I have proposed a bipartisan agreement with Rep. Walden and Rep. Schrader that can break us out of the decades-long logjam on federal forest policy, put Oregonians back to work, improve forest health, and disentangle the health of rural counties from unpredictable federal support payments. We will continue to work with the House Resources Committee to move this long-term solution for Oregon forested communities,” DeFazio said.

The one-year extension designates just under \$100 million for schools, roads, and law enforcement in failing rural counties in Oregon for the next fiscal year.

BACKGROUND

In March, the Senate attached a one-year extension of Secure Rural Schools funding for forested counties nationwide to its two-year transportation bill (S 1813), Moving Ahead for

Progress in the 21st Century (MAP-21). On April 18th, the House passed the Surface Transportation Extension Act of 2012, Part II (H.R. 4348). This 90-day extension of the surface transportation programs through September 30, 2012, is the legislative vehicle the House used to conference with the Senate.

Last fall, DeFazio, Walden, and Schrader worked with stakeholders to reach a bipartisan agreement on a long-term plan for the O&C counties. Since then, they've been working with the House Resources Committee to integrate the provisions of their proposal into larger committee legislation. Currently, House Resources is working out the details of the larger bill. A discussion draft was posted to the member's websites in February where constituents can send feedback and suggest changes to the draft.

See DeFazio video statement pt 1: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GZP30cysmCY>

DeFazio video statement pt 2: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_Hrc6IEjFBk

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