

# Beaver County Times

Wednesday February 17, 2010

## Pittsburgh region again misses out on transportation funds

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Beaver County Times

The Pittsburgh region has missed out on another round of federal funding for transportation, this time for bus routes that would have improved transportation between Pittsburgh International Airport and downtown Pittsburgh.

At the end of January, Pittsburgh was left off a funding list that would have helped plans for a magnetic high-speed rail line between the city and the Findlay Township airport.

On Wednesday, the U.S. Department of Transportation left Pittsburgh off the list again, for a round of grants that officials at the Port Authority of Allegheny County had hoped would have sped implementation of rapid bus lines between the city and the airport. The latest round of Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery, or TIGER, grants also left out money that would have paid for a wireless communication system for commercial river traffic in the region.

The \$80.7 million denied to the Port Authority isn't being viewed as a setback by officials there, although spokesman Jim Ritchie said the money would have helped speed the bus line project.

"Those routes are part of our long-term plans, and we'll continue to pursue them," Ritchie said. "We took a shot at these grants, and it didn't work out. We'll continue to look for other funding sources."

Pennsylvania did receive TIGER funds — for rail freight improvements and for a trail system serving the Philadelphia area — and U.S. Sens. Arlen Specter and Bob Casey both touted the grants.

"These two projects help achieve the goals of the stimulus package by creating jobs and promoting long-term economic recovery through investments in transportation infrastructure," Specter said in a statement. "Expanding capacity and enhancing efficiency on our nation's freight railway system encourages economic growth, creates thousands of jobs, reduces congestion, and expands vital rail service in Pennsylvania."

But after funding for the Pittsburgh "maglev" system was denied in January, both Specter and Casey met with Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood to protest the omission, saying it was wrong that the country's sixth-most-populous state received less than 1 percent of the high-speed-rail funds awarded.

The two Pennsylvania projects awarded Wednesday received about 8 percent of the program's available \$1.5 billion. Representatives of neither Casey nor Specter returned calls on Wednesday.

Freight improvements funded

Pennsylvania is one of four states that will benefit from a \$98 million transportation grant announced

Wednesday. The funds for the National Gateway Freight Rail Corridor — which includes CSX Corp. lines in Ohio, West Virginia, Pennsylvania and Maryland — will improve lines from northwest Ohio to Franklin County, Pa., including CSX lines in Pittsburgh. The improvements will allow trains to carry double-stacked containers, increasing freight capacity without boosting noise or emissions.

The overall project will cost \$183 million and will include lines that serve the East Coast.