



The National Beat

March 21st, 2024

Federal Updates

On March 15th, President Biden has nominated Jennifer Homendy for another term as chairman of the NTSB as the designated chairman, with terms ending in 2029 and 2024 ([read here](#)). Additionally, the Senate confirmed Alvin Brown and Todd Inman as NTSB members, with their terms extending through 2026 and 2027, completing the current Board membership.

On March 12th, the Senate EPW Committee voted to advance the Economic Development Reauthorization Act of 2024 ([read here](#)). This legislation aims to reauthorize the Economic Development Administration (EDA) for the first time in two decades. The Act proposes key reforms to modernize the EDA's core programs and includes provisions for workforce development and disaster assistance. It also seeks to update laws related to federal regional commissions and establish two new regional commissions.

On March 12th, following the release of the FY 2025 budget request, the Biden Administration released the analytical perspectives on proposed funding levels ([read here](#)). Regarding the Highway Trust Fund (HTF), there is a general agreement between the OMB and CBO regarding the future cash flow of the HTF through 2029, with both forecasts being within 1% of each other annually. Both bodies predict that the Trust Fund will remain solvent until mid-2028. The OMB projects a balance of \$28.3 billion at the end of FY 2027, with funds running out by mid-2028. The CBO's forecast is slightly more pessimistic, with a \$3.2 billion lower balance at the end of 2027 and insolvency occurring a month or two earlier.

On March 11th, The Biden Administration released the FY 2025 budget request for the USDOT, which proposes a \$58 billion increase from FY 2021 levels, marking a 67% rise, but faces a \$1.7 billion cut from the FY 2024 level due to discretionary spending caps ([read here](#)). This necessitates cuts and prioritization, including not renewing the IIJA advance appropriations, which could significantly reduce funding for transportation after 2026. The request includes \$81.7 billion in obligation limitations, \$1.9 billion in mandatory resources, and \$36.8 billion in emergency-designated funds for infrastructure and safety. Key allocations include \$62 billion for highways, \$14.3 billion for transit formula grants, and \$2.4 billion for the Capital Investment Grant program, aiming for a total of \$4 billion with advanced appropriations. Additionally, \$800 million is proposed for the RAISE and MEGA grant programs, and \$1.3 billion for the NHTSA to enhance roadway safety. Eno Transportation provides a detailed summary of the budget request ([view here](#)).

On March 7th, the House T&I Committee held a hearing to discuss the IIJA Transportation Grants ([watch here](#)). The Committee discussed issues and opportunities related to applying for and securing discretionary grants administered by USDOT. Amy O'Leary, the Executive Director of the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments (SEMCOG) was a witness for the hearing. Amy O'Leary underscored the pivotal role of MPOs like SEMCOG in regional transportation planning and collaboration with local entities. She emphasized the importance of discretionary grants for addressing regional transportation challenges and fostering safety, innovation, and significant projects. She advocated for a shift from



discretionary to formula-based direct federal funding for certain programs to ensure equitable distribution. Amy O’Leary also highlighted the hurdles local communities face in the grant application process, suggesting simplification and increased direct regional funding may improve project execution.

On March 6th, Representative Rick Crawford launched his campaign to become the chair of the House T&I Committee, challenging the current Chair, Sam Graves, who seeks a waiver from the GOP’s six-year term limit rule to continue in his role ([read here](#)). Both are engaging with House leadership and the steering committee, which will have a significant say in the decision, especially as its composition may change following the November elections.

On March 5th, Congress released legislative developments specifically related to transportation funding, as outlined in the newly unveiled bill text for fiscal year 2024 ([read bill here](#)) ([read THUD bill summary here](#)). The six-bill package also includes tables with earmarks for community project funding ([read here](#)). The bill allocates a total of \$103 billion for transportation initiatives. This includes more than \$79 billion accessible through the Highway Trust Fund. The USDOT is set to receive \$106.4 billion in total budgetary resources. This represents a slight increase of \$15.5 billion above current levels. The bill allocates \$345 million for the RAISE Grant program, which, when combined with the \$1.5 billion from the IJA advanced appropriations, totals \$1.845 billion for FY 2024. A total of \$2.97 billion is allocated to the FRA, with significant funding dedicated to Amtrak and rail safety improvements, particularly in response to recent safety concerns. Additionally, the bill provides \$16.6 billion for the FTA, supporting capital investment grants and other initiatives.

EPA

On March 20th, the EPA issued new rules aimed at significantly reducing tailpipe emissions from cars, trucks, and SUVs, thereby accelerating the shift towards EVs ([read here](#)). By 2032, the EPA expects 68% of new cars sold to be electric, in line with the Biden Administration’s goals to reduce GHG emissions. The rule, while not mandating electric vehicle purchases, encourages manufacturers to increase their EV offerings due to fleetwide average greenhouse gas emissions requirements, potentially leading to a significant increase in EV availability and adoption.

USDOT

On March 21st, FHWA released a notice requesting public comments on proposed metrics for evaluating the effectiveness and impacts of projects under the Promoting Resilient Operations for Transformative, Efficient, and Cost-Saving Transportation ([PROTECT](#)) Discretionary Grant Program ([read here](#)). The comment period ends on May 20, 2024. These metrics aim to assess the resilience of transportation projects to climate change and natural disasters, focusing on planning and resilience grants. The FHWA seeks feedback on the proposed metrics, data availability, utility for decision-making, and reporting burden, especially for projects in disadvantaged communities. The final metrics will be used to evaluate selected PROTECT projects.

On March 19th, FHWA announced the opening of applications for the Active Transportation Infrastructure Investment Program (ATIIP) ([read here](#)). The ATIIP aims to enhance safety and connectivity for bicyclists and pedestrians across communities nationwide. With an allocation of up to \$44.5 million, this program seeks to support projects that create comprehensive networks of bicycle and pedestrian pathways. These projects should facilitate safe, convenient, and accessible routes to key



destinations such as schools, workplaces, public transit, healthcare facilities, and more. The program offers two types of grants: Planning and Design grants, and Construction grants. Applications are due by June 17th; MPOs are eligible to apply.

On March 14th, USDOT announced over \$50 million in grants for 34 technology demonstration projects across the U.S. as part of the Strengthening Mobility and Revolutionizing Transportation (SMART) Grants Program ([read here](#)). The selected projects cover a range of technologies aimed at improving road safety, transit accessibility, and infrastructure resilience, among other goals. This marks the second year of the SMART grant awards; the program supports planning and prototyping stages for smart community technologies to advance transportation systems.

On March 12th, FHWA proposed changes to its Buy America requirements to discontinue of the general waiver for manufactured products ([read here](#)). This change mandates that manufactured products used in federal-aid highway construction projects must be produced in the US, aligning with the Build America, Buy America Act (BABA) provisions of the IIJA. The proposal sets standards for what constitutes a product as US produced, requiring that the cost of components mined, produced, or manufactured in the U.S. must exceed 55% of the total component cost. The proposal also outlines specific definitions and standards for applying these Buy America requirements, including clarifications on what constitutes manufactured products versus iron or steel products, and how costs are calculated for components. This initiative reflects a broader policy shift towards enhancing domestic production and reducing dependency on foreign materials for infrastructure projects. Comments on the proposed rule are requested by May 13, 2024.

On March 12th, MARAD announced a NOFO for \$500 million through the Port Infrastructure Development Program (PIDP), aimed at modernizing the nation's ports and strengthening supply chains ([read here](#)). The PIDP grants are designed to enhance the efficiency, safety, and reliability of goods movement, supporting a range of projects from dock replacements to on-dock rail improvements across urban and rural communities.

On March 12th, FHWA announced the Low Carbon Transportation Materials Program, funded by the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), allocating \$1.2 billion to reduce air pollution in the transportation sector across all states ([read here](#)). This initiative aims to decrease greenhouse gas emissions by promoting the use of low carbon construction materials in transportation projects. The program, part of the broader Federal Buy Clean Initiative, will distribute funds through an upcoming Notice of Funding Opportunity, targeting a variety of applicants including states, cities, tribes, and MPOs, to foster innovation and reduce carbon emissions in infrastructure projects.

On March 11th, USDOT's Build America Bureau released a NOFO for the Innovative Finance and Asset Concession Grant Program ([read here](#)) This program allocates \$57.72 million for fiscal years 2022 through 2024 to explore and develop public-private partnerships and innovative financing strategies for projects. The first \$1 million of each grant requires no local match, facilitating broader access to these funds. All applications must be submitted by May 9, 2024.

On March 6th, FHWA issued an RFI to gather stakeholder feedback on updating federal standards for EV charging infrastructure, focusing on incorporating new technologies and innovations ([read here](#)). This RFI aims to ensure that the evolving federal standards for EV charging stations, particularly regarding



connector types, align with market demands and technological advancements, such as the newly standardized North American Charging Standard (NACS) connector. Comments must be received by April 5th.

On February 29th, FTA announced the availability of \$9.9 billion in federal funding to support public transportation across the US ([read here](#)). This funding is allocated to states, urbanized areas, and tribal governments based on statutory formulas, representing partial-year federal support for transit. The FY 2024 apportionments have been updated to reflect new urbanized area boundaries and population figures from the Census Bureau (i.e., released in December 2022). The FTA has utilized the most recent service numbers reported to the National Transit Database for calculating apportionments (i.e., a shift from the COVID-19 pandemic approach, where 2019 data or the most recent year reported was used due to ridership impacts).

Congressional Hearings, Meetings, & Markups

- On March 21st, the House T&I Subcommittee on Highways and Transit held a hearing regarding the importance of federal highway and transit programs for rural areas, the unique challenges facing these communities, and implementation of the IIJA ([watch here](#)).
- On March 7th, the House T&I Committee held a hearing to discuss the IIJA Transportation Grants ([watch here](#)).

NOFOs

Learn about federal grants available to MPOs and key NOFO information in AMPO's NOFO Tracker ([access here](#)). The Tracker is available on [ampo.org](#) under the "Resources" drop down.

New (MPO Eligible)

- FHWA's [Active Transportation Infrastructure Investment Program \(ATIIP\)](#)
 - **Description:** The ATIIP aims to enhance safety and connectivity for bicyclists and pedestrians across communities nationwide. With an allocation of up to \$44.5 million, this program seeks to support projects that create comprehensive networks of bicycle and pedestrian pathways. The program will allocate a minimum of \$3 million for Planning and Design grants and will ensure that at least 30% of the funding supports the construction of active transportation networks and spines. The federal share of project costs will not exceed 80%, except for projects serving communities with prevalent poverty rates, where it may cover up to 100%.
 - **Deadline:** June 17, 2024
- Build America Bureau's [Innovative Finance and Asset Concession Assistance Program](#)
 - **Description:** This program allocates \$57.72 million for fiscal years 2022 through 2024 to explore and develop public-private partnerships and innovative financing strategies for projects. The first \$1 million of each grant requires no local match, facilitating broader access to these funds.
 - **Deadline:** May 9, 2024.
- FHWA's [Prioritization Process Pilot Program \(PPPP\)](#)



- **Description:** FHWA plans to release a NOFO in mid to late November for the Prioritization Process Pilot Program (PPPP). The program will support data-driven approaches to planning.
- **Deadline:** May 1, 2024.
- USDOT, [Safe Streets and Roads for All \(SS4A\)](#)
 - **Description:** to support communities in planning and implementing projects to reduce traffic-related deaths and serious injuries. Planning and demonstration grants encompass the development of comprehensive safety action plans, including supplemental safety planning, and/or safety demonstration activities that inform an Action Plan. Implementation grants support strategies or projects that are consistent with an existing Action Plan and may also bundle funding requests for supplemental planning and demonstration activities that inform an Action Plan.
 - **Implementation grant deadline:** May 16, 2024.
 - **Varying deadlines for Planning and demonstration grants:** April 4th, May 16th, and August 29th.

Upcoming (MPO Eligible)

- FHWA's [Low Carbon Transportation Materials Program](#)
 - **Description:** \$2 billion available to fund low carbon materials that create less pollution by reducing the levels of embodied greenhouse gas emissions, including concrete (and cement), glass, asphalt mix, and steel. In FHWA's Low Carbon Transportation Materials (LCTM) Program \$1.2 Billion is available to State DOTs through a RFA to fund activities and projects that advance the use of low carbon materials and products. This RFA approach will allow FHWA to quickly provide reimbursement or incentive funds to states to begin eligible activities and incorporate low carbon materials on construction projects now. In the coming months FHWA will also make available \$800 million to target non-State applicants, including metropolitan planning organizations, local governments or agencies, tribes, and other agencies through a NOFO. FHWA encourages non-State applicants to partner with states on applications and projects.

National Transportation News

Coastal metropolitan areas like Silicon Valley and New York City rank the best in terms of reducing GHG emissions, largely due to their robust transit options and lower VMT ([read here](#)). The 2024 US Transportation Climate Impact Index, which evaluates the one hundred most populous metro areas based on factors such as VMT, fuel economy, and transit, bike, and pedestrian activity, highlights this. The report indicates that cities like San Jose excel due to low VMT, high electric vehicle penetration, and better fuel economy, despite lower transit scores. Conversely, regions like Augusta-Richmond and Omaha rank at the bottom, with higher VMT and less use of fuel-efficient vehicles or alternative transportation modes.

