



The National Beat

May 30th, 2024

Federal Updates

On May 29th, the EPA announced \$875 million in funding to purchase over 3,400 school buses, predominantly electric, as part of efforts to improve air quality and reduce GHG pollution ([read here](#)).

On May 26th, House Appropriations Chair Tom Cole noted he plans to reallocate \$800 million from transportation and housing programs to the EPA and Interior Department due to an unexpected \$1.6 billion boost from housing fees ([read here](#)). This funding shift addresses numerous requests and needs in the Interior sector, while House Republicans continue to pursue tight budget limits for fiscal 2025. However, an updated forecast by the Congressional Budget Office revealed increased offsetting fees for HUD housing programs, meaning the actual gross funding for the Transportation-HUD bill could be almost \$700 million higher, despite the net decrease.

On May 24th, the House Energy and Commerce subcommittee passed the "AM Radio for Every Vehicle Act," which mandates new cars be equipped with AM radio, despite opposition from electric vehicle manufacturers who argue it could hinder EV production and climate goals ([read here](#)). Supporters claim the mandate is crucial for public safety, with bipartisan backing, while opponents worry about increased costs and production delays.

On May 23rd, a settlement was reached between the EPA, the Justice Department, and Norfolk Southern ([read here](#)). Norfolk Southern will pay over \$500 million for environmental cleanup and rail safety upgrades following last year's train derailment in East Palestine, Ohio, with the settlement including \$310 million for remediation and \$200 million for safety improvements. The settlement mandates new safety measures, and also includes funds for health programs and water monitoring. The NTSB is expected to release a report on the derailment in the coming weeks.

On May 23rd, House appropriators approved funding totals for twelve fiscal 2025 spending bills in a party-line vote, adhering to budget caps from last year's debt limit measure but ignoring additional agreed-upon funding ([read here](#)).

On May 22nd, Sen. Rick Scott (R-FL) announced his bid to succeed Mitch McConnell as Senate GOP leader ([read here](#)). Scott will face Senate Minority Whip John Thune (R-SD) and former whip Sen. John Cornyn (R-TX) in the leadership race, contingent upon his reelection in November.

On May 22nd, The Senate EPW Committee approved the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA), focusing on addressing flooding, droughts, and various environmental challenges ([read here](#)). The bill directs the Army Corps of Engineers to complete numerous projects, including flood risk management, ecosystem restoration, and a pilot program to modify dam operations in drought-prone areas.

On May 21st, the Senate Commerce, Science, and Transportation subcommittee held a hearing on the roadway safety crisis, discussing various factors contributing to safety issues and potential policy solutions ([read here](#)). Key points included the need for improved street design, the importance of



leveraging safety technology, the role of autonomous vehicle policy, and concerns about the impact of electric vehicle weight on safety.

On May 16th, A group of lawmakers, led by Sen. Joe Manchin and others, introduced a Congressional Review Act resolution to overturn the Biden administration's rules on EV tax credits, arguing they are too lenient on allowing reliance on Chinese minerals and batteries ([read here](#)).

On May 16th, House Appropriations Chair Tom Cole announced a schedule for marking up a dozen annual spending bills, aiming for committee approval of all fiscal 2025 measures by mid-July ([read here](#)). The T-HUD full committee markup will occur on July 10th, 2024.

The Biden Administration has pledged full federal funding to rebuild Baltimore's collapsed Francis Scott Key Bridge, but some Republicans in Congress are concerned about the federal cost and potential lawsuits ([read here](#)). While there is bipartisan agreement on the necessity of the rebuild, disagreements persist over how the funding should be divided and whether taxpayers should bear the full cost.

The Congressional Review Act (CRA) is a significant legislative tool that allows Congress to overturn federal regulations with a simple majority vote within 60 legislative days of the rule being finalized. This power is particularly crucial during transitions between presidential administrations, as seen in the recent uptick in rule-making by the Biden administration to preempt potential rollbacks ([read here](#)). The CRA not only facilitates swift congressional action but also prevents agencies from reissuing substantially similar rules in the future. There are over 100 regulations that are unlikely to be passed before the CRA kicks-in, leaving them vulnerable. One of these regulations is the planning rule, so it appears unlikely that the rule will be finalized until after the CRA period wraps up.

Congressional Hearings, Meetings, & Markups

- On May 23rd, House T&I Subcommittee on Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation held a hearing on the FY 2025 Coast Guard budget request ([watch here](#))
- On May 21st, the Senate Commerce, Science, and Transportation subcommittee held a hearing on the roadway safety crisis ([watch here](#)).
- On May 21st, the Senate Subcommittee on International Trade, Customs, and Global Competitiveness held a hearing on trade enforcement at US Ports ([watch here](#)).
- On May 16th, the House Homeland Security Subcommittee on Emergency Management and Technology held a hearing on the use of drones in emergency response ([watch here](#)).
- On May 15th, the House T&I Committee held a hearing on the federal response to the Francis Scott Key Bridge collapse ([watch here](#)).
- On May 15th, the House Homeland Security Subcommittee on Transportation and Maritime Security held a hearing on the FY 2025 TSA budget request ([watch here](#)).

USDOT

On May 23rd, FTA announced the availability of \$10,496,164 to support comprehensive or site-specific planning for new fixed guideway and core capacity improvement projects under the Pilot Program for Transit-Oriented Development Planning ([read here](#)). Projects with a substantial focus on affordable housing may receive up to 100% federal support. Applications are due by July 22nd, 2024.



On May 22nd, FHWA released Q&As regarding the waiver of Buy America Requirements for De Minimis Costs and Small Grants. This waiver, effective for awards obligated or subawards made on or after August 16, 2023, exempts certain small-scale and low-cost projects from the stringent Buy America requirements under specific conditions ([read here](#)).

On May 22nd, FHWA announced Kristin White as the new FHWA Deputy Administrator. She has served as FHWA Chief Counsel since July 2023 ([read here](#)).

On May 22nd, The FRA issued three studies highlighting the need for more data on long freight trains to determine if they present unique safety concerns, particularly in terms of braking performance ([read here](#)). The studies revealed that longer trains take significantly longer to recharge their brake systems and suggested further testing under various conditions to better understand the implications.

On May 22nd, ARPA-1 announced a recently published RFI to gather input on the applications, challenges, and opportunities of artificial intelligence (AI) in transportation ([read here](#)). This initiative, seeks feedback on current and future AI applications, associated risks and barriers, and the impact on autonomous mobility ecosystems, with submissions due by July 2, 2024.

On May 17th, USDOT published a video and fact sheet highlighting its transformative impact of the IJIA ([read here](#)).

On May 14th, the FRA announced over \$2 billion in Federal-State Partnership for Intercity Passenger Rail Program funding for the Northeast Corridor to enhance and modernize rail infrastructure ([read here](#)).

On May 13th, USDOT announced the FY 2024 NOFO for the Strengthening Mobility and Revolutionizing Transportation (SMART) Grants Program ([read here](#)). The SMART Grants are designed to support demonstration projects that enhance transportation safety and efficiency through smart community technologies and systems. Applications are due July 12th at 5:00 PM; MPOs are eligible to apply.

On May 13th, USDOT announced it allocated \$1.7 million to establish the Center for Emissions Reduction, Resiliency, and Climate Equity in Transportation at the University of California, Davis, which will support research aimed at decarbonizing transportation and enhancing infrastructure resilience ([read here](#)).

National Transportation News

City governments are rapidly adopting EVs for municipal fleets, driven by climate goals, cost savings, and air quality improvements ([read here](#)). With initiatives such as purchasing cooperatives and leveraging federal grants and tax incentives, cities like Dallas, New York, and San Jose are leading the way, showcasing the viability and benefits of EVs for both public and private sectors.

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)

- FTA's [TOD Planning](#)



- **Description:** the Pilot Program for TOD Planning provides funding to communities to integrate land use and transportation planning in new fixed guideway and core capacity transit project corridors. 100% federal share if housing is addressed comprehensively.
- **Deadline:** July 22nd, 2024 ([NOFO here](#))
 - USDOT will hold a ‘How to Apply’ webinar on June 5th at 2:00 PM, ([register here](#))
- USDOT’s [Strengthening Mobility and Revolutionizing Transportation \(SMART\) Grants](#)
 - **Description:** applications for Stage 1 Planning and Prototyping grants, which focus on deploying technology demonstrations and prototypes to address real-world transportation challenges, while also building data and technological capacity for state, local, and tribal governments.
 - **Deadline:** July 12th, 2024 ([NOFO here](#))
 - USDOT will hold a ‘How to Apply’ webinar on May 28th at 1:00 PM (ET), ([register here](#))
- MARAD’s [United States Marine Highway Program](#)
 - **Description:** Grants to enhance the effectiveness of transportation in the marine highway sector. USMHP aims to expand the use of navigable waters, relieving landside congestion, reducing air emissions, and providing new transportation options.
 - **Deadline:** July 12th, 2024 ([NOFO here](#))
- Joint Office of Energy and Transportation’s [Communities Taking Charge Program](#)
 - **Description:** Funding will address critical topic areas to expanding EV charging access to all drivers and riders.
 - **Deadline:** July 16, 2024 ([FOA here](#))
- FHWA’s [Transportation Access Pilot Program \(TAPP\)](#)
 - **Description:** Pilot program to enhance the development of transportation access across different transportation modes and facilitate better connectivity to key destinations such as jobs, education, health care, and recreation
 - **Deadline:** June 7th, 2024 ([apply here](#))
- HUD’s [Preservation and Reinvestment Initiative for Community Enhancement \(PRICE\) Competition](#)
 - **Description:** This funding supports MPOs in planning and implementing projects that enhance manufactured housing communities and align with HUD’s comprehensive urban and regional planning objectives.
 - **Deadline:** June 5th, 2024; possible deadline extension to June 24th ([apply here](#))

Coming Soon (MPO Eligible)

- USDA’s [Broadband Technical Assistance Program](#)
 - **Description:** For a project to be eligible to receive federal funds from the BTA program, it must promote broadband expansion into a rural community. BTA does not have a cost share or matching requirement.
 - **Deadline:** TBD—Upcoming Webinar on May 22nd at 1:00 PM (ET) ([Register here](#))
- FHWA’s [Charging and Fueling Infrastructure](#)
 - **Description:** Grant to deploy publicly accessible electric vehicle charging and alternative fueling infrastructure in the places people live and work – urban and rural areas alike – in addition to along designated Alternative Fuel Corridors (AFCs).
 - **Deadline:** TBD—NOFO expected mid June