



The National Beat

June 13th, 2024

Federal Updates

On June 13th, the House Science, Space, and Technology Subcommittee on Oversight held a hearing on the effects California's emission restrictions' impact on the U.S. rail network ([watch here](#)). In the lead up to this hearing, House Republicans have called on the EPA to reject California's rail emissions rule. The rule, implemented by the California Air Resources Board) in January, aims to reduce locomotive pollution by prohibiting certain trains over 23 years old by 2030, and imposing fees based on emissions.

On June 12th, Vince Fong (R-CA) and Chris Deluzio (D-PA) were officially added to the House T&I Committee Roster. Additionally, on June 3rd, Representative Fong was sworn into Congress after winning a special election to complete the term of former House Speaker Kevin McCarthy ([read here](#)).

On June 11th, Representatives Troy Nehls and Seth Moulton announced they are collaborating on a bipartisan House rail safety bill, with Nehls emphasizing the need to wait for the NTSB's final report on the East Palestine, Ohio accident before finalizing the legislation ([read here](#)). The bill aims to address rail safety improvements, drawing input from labor and other stakeholders, and contrasts with a Senate bill introduced in December 2023.

On June 7th, the House Appropriations subcommittee approved a draft appropriations bill this week, proposing an 8% funding increase for the Transportation Security Administration and a 10% increase for the Coast Guard ([read here](#)). Potential amendments are expected during the full House Appropriations Committee markup on June 12th.

On June 5th, during the Senate EPW Committee Oversight and Budget hearing of the FHWA, Administrator Bhatt provided an update on several key issues ([watch here](#)). Highlights included the \$3.5 billion backlog in the Emergency Relief fund, the potential delay in the Francis Scott Key Bridge reconstruction funding, the rising August Redistribution of highway funds, the overdue advisory board for the national mileage-based user fee pilot program, slow progress on IJJA electric vehicle charging installations, and ongoing challenges with Buy America rule compliance.

Congress is preparing for a significant fiscal clash in early 2025, with critical issues such as the debt ceiling, federal spending, tax cuts, and budget caps converging simultaneously ([read here](#)). The outcome of the November elections will significantly influence the approach and resolution of these impending fiscal challenges.

Congressional Hearings, Meetings, & Markups

- On June 12th, the House Appropriations Committee held a meeting to mark up the State-Foreign Operations and Homeland Security appropriations bills for FY 2025.
- On June 12, the House T&I Subcommittee on Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation held a hearing on the Coast Guard recapitalization ([watch here](#)).
- On June 12th, the House T&I Subcommittee on Railroads, Pipelines, and Hazardous Materials held a hearing on Amtrak and intercity passenger rail oversight ([watch here](#)).



- On June 13th, the Senate Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee held a hearing on the FAA oversight of aviation manufacturing ([watch here](#)).
- On June 13th, the House T&I Subcommittee on Highways and Transit held a hearing on post-COVID mass transit ridership and revenue ([watch here](#)).
- On June 13th, the House Science, Space, and Technology Subcommittee on Oversight held a hearing on the effects California's emission restrictions' impact on the U.S. rail network ([watch here](#)).

USDOT

On June 7th, NHTSA finalized new fuel economy standards for model years 2027-2031 ([read here](#)). These standards will increase fuel economy for passenger cars and light trucks by 2% annually, reaching approximately 50.4 miles per gallon by 2031, while heavy-duty pickups and vans will see a 10% annual increase from 2030-2032 and 8% from 2033-2035, culminating in a fleetwide average of about 35 miles per gallon by 2035. This rule is a scaled back version of the original proposed fuel economy standards for SUVs and pickup trucks. The new rule requires a 45 mpg average by 2031 for these vehicles, down from the previously proposed 52.2 mpg, in response to automaker concerns and to focus resources on manufacturing EVs.

On June 6th, FHWA released a NOFO for the FY 2024 through FY 2026 Wildlife Crossings Pilot Program ([read here](#)). This program offers funding for projects aimed at reducing wildlife-vehicle collisions and enhancing habitat connectivity for both terrestrial and aquatic species. FY 2024 and FY 2025 Applications are due by September 4th, 2024 ([view here](#)). FY 2026 applications will open on May 1, 2025, and close on August 1, 2025. MPOs are eligible to apply.

On June 6th, FTA announced \$7.8 million in ICAM Pilot Program grant awards to improve public transportation for people with disabilities, older adults, and low-income individuals ([read here](#)).

On June 4th, FHWA commented that that as a result of the decision on March 27th in the US District Court for the Northern District of Texas which vacated and remanded the Final Rule to the USDOT, effectively nullifying the rule nationwide, USDOT has updated its guidance in accordance with the Court's decision noting that States and MPOs are not required to submit initial targets and reports at this time.

On June 3rd, FMCSA announced \$480 million in grant awards from the Motor Carrier Safety Assistance program, aimed at preventing crashes, fatalities, and injuries involving commercial motor vehicles ([read here](#)).

On May 31st, the FTA released a notice regarding FY 2024 funding and program information ([read here](#)). The FTA has announced full-year apportionments and allocations for various grant programs. A total of \$20.86 billion has been appropriated for FY 2024. Funds must be obligated in grants by September 30, 2027, or they will revert to FTA for reapportionment.

On May 30th, FHWA announced a \$1.3 billion funding opportunity for EV charging and alternative-fueling infrastructure through the Charging and Fueling Infrastructure (CFI) Discretionary Grant Program ([read here](#)). This program provides two funding categories of grants: Community Charging and Alternative Fueling Grants and Charging and Alternative Fuel Corridor Grants. MPOs are eligible to apply ([access](#)



[NOFO here](#)). New applications are due by August 28, 2024. Reconsideration requests for past applications are due by July 1, 2024.

National Transportation News

Governor Kathy Hochul's decision to pause NYC's congestion pricing plan may potentially impede similar initiatives across the US ([read here](#)). NYC's plan, which was expected to generate over \$1 billion annually for the MTA, was seen as a model for other cities. The reversal, driven by concerns over unintended consequences and opposition from business interests, suburban voters, and New Jersey's government, may delay national efforts to implement congestion pricing.

NOFOs

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

New (MPO Eligible)

- [FHWA's Wildlife Crossings Pilot Program \(FY 2024-2026\)](#)
 - **Description:** program offers funding for projects aimed at reducing wildlife-vehicle collisions and enhancing habitat connectivity for both terrestrial and aquatic species.
 - **Deadline:**
 - FY 2024 and FY 2025 Applications are due by September 4th, 2024
 - FY 2026 applications will open on May 1, 2025, and close on August 1, 2025. MPOs are eligible to apply.
- FHWA's [Charging and Fueling Infrastructure Grant](#)
 - **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:** New applications due by August 28, 2024. Reconsideration requests for past applications due by July 1, 2024.
- 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](#))