



The National Beat

June 27th, 2024

Federal Updates

** Note: The Senate Appropriations Committee will start its fiscal 2025 markups after the July 4th recess, despite ongoing disputes over funding totals. With federal funding set to expire on October 1, Congress may need to pass a continuing resolution to avoid a government shutdown, allowing more time for negotiations.*

On June 27th, the House T&I hearing held a hearing to discuss USDOT's policies, programs, and the fiscal year 2025 budget request, with Secretary Pete Buttigieg as a witness ([watch here](#)). Secretary Buttigieg reported on the USDOT's achievements and challenges with the rollout of the IIJA. Members highlighted various issues with a large focus on rail safety, EVs, IIJA project delivery, and the solvency of the highway trust fund. AMPO will provide a detailed summary of the hearing in the coming days.

On June 27th, the House Appropriations Committee held a markup of the draft funding bill for THUD ([watch here](#)). The draft THUD budget fits under a \$90.4 billion discretionary budget authority, likely requiring significant cuts. The draft THUD budget, "provides a discretionary total of \$25.131 billion to the Department of Transportation, which is \$1.856 billion below the FY24 enacted level and \$336 million below the President's Budget Request" ([read markup summary here](#)).

On June 26th, the House T&I Committee approved the Water Resources Development Act of 2024 (WRDA) ([read here](#)). The WRDA includes reforms to streamline project development, empower local sponsors, and reauthorize the FEMA National Dam Safety Program through 2028.

On June 24th, the Supreme Court agreed to hear *Seven County Infrastructure Coalition v. Eagle County, Colorado*, which will determine whether NEPA requires agencies to study environmental impacts beyond their regulatory authority ([read here](#)). This decision could have significant implications for environmental review processes nationwide.

On June 24th, the USDA announced the availability of \$25 million for the FY 2024 round of the Broadband Technical Assistance (BTA) Program ([read here](#)). The BTA program promotes the expansion of broadband in rural areas by funding activities such as project planning, community engagement, and financial sustainability.

On June 20th, the CBO released its latest budget projections revealing that the Highway Trust Fund (HTF), which shows a \$290 billion revenue shortfall by 2035, driven by declining gas tax revenues and increased spending levels mandated by the IIJA ([read here](#)). An analysis by Eno Transportation noted that, while the HTF will remain solvent through the mid-2020s due to high interest earnings from a previous \$118 billion general fund bailout, the projected gap between annual spending and revenue will grow significantly, necessitating additional general fund bailouts or increased tax revenues to maintain solvency ([read here](#)).

On June 18th, the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on THUD discussed how the USDOT's Build America Bureau can better support TOD projects ([watch here](#)). The hearing explored the potential of the



Transportation Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (TIFIA) to finance small-scale community TOD projects. Witnesses identified barriers such as high credit rating requirements and complex eligibility processes and recommended legislative and administrative changes to make TIFIA more accessible, especially for smaller projects and tribes.

On June 17th, the GAO released a report identifying 20 recommendations for the USDOT ([read here](#)). Building off a report previously published in May, the GAO added 3 new priority recommendations, emphasizing transparency, safety, comprehensive planning, cybersecurity, and reducing fraud and abuse, highlighting areas for significant operational improvement.

On June 13th, oil, gas, auto dealer, and corn grower groups filed a lawsuit in the U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit challenging the Biden administration's new tailpipe emissions rule for 2027-2032 vehicles ([read here](#)). The groups argue the rule exceeds the EPA's authority and effectively mandates electric vehicle adoption. The lawsuit asserts that such significant regulatory changes require explicit congressional approval. EPA Administrator maintains that the rule, aimed at reducing the largest source of U.S. pollution, is within the agency's authority.

USDOT

On June 26th, USDOT announced \$1.8 billion in RAISE grants for 148 projects across the US ([read here](#)). This brings total RAISE grants to over \$7.2 billion for more than 550 projects, aimed at improving road safety, community revitalization, and economic opportunity.

On June 26th, USDOT released Justice40 baselines, which exceeded the Justice40 goal for both FY 2022 and 2023 ([read here](#)).

On June 25th, FHWA published a NOFO for The National Culvert Removal, Replacement, and Restoration Grant Program (Culvert Aquatic Organism Passage, Culvert AOP Program) for FY 2023 through 2026 ([view here](#)).

On June 25th, USDOT published a fact sheet on rail safety, which details strides under the IIJA in holding railroads accountable, and supporting first responders and workers ([read here](#)). Following the Norfolk Southern derailment, a comprehensive effort by USDOT has been mobilized to aid East Palestine and ongoing actions include deploying infrastructure funds and enhancing rail safety standards.

On June 24th, USDOT announced significant progress in enhancing transportation safety and consumer protections ([read here](#)). Key achievements include final rules to improve rail and roadway safety, such as requiring real-time hazardous material shipment information for first responders and mandating automatic emergency breaking in all passenger vehicles.

On June 21st, USDOT announced \$6 million in quick release Emergency Relief funds to the Wyoming DOT for repairing Highway 22 in Teton Pass following a landslide ([read here](#)). This funding will also support the construction of a temporary detour to restore access to key tourist destinations like Jackson Hole and Yellowstone National Park.

On June 20th, FHWA announced \$60 million in grants under the Saving Lives with Connectivity: Accelerating V2X Deployment program ([read here](#)). The grants awarded to Arizona, Texas, and Utah will



serve as national models for deploying V2X technologies aimed at improving road safety, mobility, and efficiency.

On June 18th, FHWA announced over \$108 million in grants for 85 projects to improve transportation and reduce roadway fatalities through the Nationally Significant Federal Lands and Tribal Projects and Tribal Transportation Program Safety Fund programs ([read here](#)).

On June 18th, FHWA announced a \$22 million grant to the National Park Service to modernize and reconstruct a road segment of Yellowstone National Park ([read here](#)). This project, part of an \$88.2 million investment package, aims to improve safety and tourism benefits in the area.

On June 18th, PHMSA announced the availability of \$200 million in grants through the Natural Gas Distribution Infrastructure Safety and Modernization (NGDISM) grant program ([read here](#)). The NGDISM program aims to mitigate safety risks and reduce methane emissions from aging natural gas pipes.

On June 6th, FHWA released its latest update to the National Highway Construction Cost Index (NHCCI) revealed that while the index declined by 0.5% in Q4 2023, seasonally adjusted figures show a 4.0% increase ([read here](#)). Despite quarterly fluctuations, highway construction costs have surged by 68% since Q4 2020. This inflation has significantly impacted federal contracts, reducing \$182.4 billion in nominal spending since January 2021 to a real value of \$132.9 billion. The NHCCI's trends, influenced by oil and asphalt prices, reflect broader economic pressures on construction costs.

Congressional Hearings, Meetings, & Markups

- On June 28th, the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Energy and Water Development held a markup of the draft FY 2024 appropriations bill ([watch here](#)).
- On June 27th, the House T&I Committee held a hearing on USDOT oversight and FY 2025 budget requests, with USDOT Secretary Buttigieg testifying ([watch here](#)).
- On June 27th, the House Appropriations THUD Committee held a markup of the draft FY 2024 THUD appropriations bill ([watch here](#)).
- On June 26th, the House T&I Committee held a business meeting to mark-up a draft of the WRDA legislation ([watch here](#)).
- On June 18th, the Senate Appropriations THUD Subcommittee held a hearing on maximizing transit-oriented development ([watch here](#)).
- On June 18th, the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Subcommittee on Investigations held a hearing on Boeing's safety programming ([watch here](#)).

National Transportation News

On June 18th, On June 18, 2024, the MTA halted construction on New York City's Second Avenue Subway due to a sudden \$15 billion gap caused by the cancellation of the downtown NYC congestion pricing program ([read here](#)). Despite having signed a \$3.405 billion funding agreement for the project, Congress must now decide if the requested \$497 million for fiscal 2025 should be allocated, given the MTA's funding uncertainties and potential reallocation needs in the DOT budget.

On June 17th, The National Parks Conservation Association (NPCA) recently published the, "Transportation Funding in and Near National Parks: NPCA & Partners Field Guide to Federal Grants,



Transportation Funding Toolkit" ([read here](#)). This comprehensive guide is designed to help eligible applicants for IJJA discretionary funding secure federal funding for transportation and transit projects in and near national parks.

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 [National Culvert Removal, Replacement, and Restoration Grant Program](#)
 - **Description:** The Culvert AOP Program provides grants for projects that replace, remove, or repair culverts or weirs to improve or restore fish passage for anadromous fish.
 - **Deadline:** September 23rd, 2024
 - FHWA will host a Webinar on July 15th at 1:00 PM (ET) ([register here](#))
- USDA's [Broadband Technical Assistance \(BTA\) Program](#)
 - **Description:** The BTA program promotes the expansion of broadband in rural areas by funding activities such as project planning, community engagement, and financial sustainability. Eligible projects include identifying broadband resources, preparing necessary studies and reports, and improving broadband facilities management and operations.
 - **Deadline:** August 20th, 2024
 - Informational Webinar: Wednesday, July 17, 2024, at 1:00 PM (ET) ([register here](#))
- [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](#))