

The National Beat

July 25th, 2024

Sections

Federal Updates.....	1
USDOT.....	2
Congressional Hearings, Meetings, & Markups.....	3
National Transportation News.....	4
NOFOs.....	4
Policy Analysis.....	5

Federal Updates

On July 25, 2024, the Senate Committee on Appropriations approved the FY 2025 THUD Appropriations Act, allocating \$98.7 billion in discretionary funding. The bill includes significant investments in infrastructure, such as \$28.5 billion for USDOT and \$69.8 billion for HUD. The Senate and House versions of the THUD bill have notable differences in funding allocations and priorities. [Watch Senate business meeting here](#). [Read THUD bill summary here](#). *Read the “Policy Analysis” section of today’s National Beat for a comparison between the House and Senate FY 2025 THUD bills.*

On July 24, 2024, House Republicans abandoned their goal of passing all 12 FY 2025 spending bills before the August recess, having only passed four measures: Military Construction-VA, Defense, Homeland Security, and State-Foreign Operations. The decision to cancel votes next week follows a lack of support for several bills, leading to a focus on passing a continuing resolution in September to avoid a government shutdown on October 1. Key bills faced significant challenges, with the latter two being pulled from the floor due to internal disagreements and failed amendments. [Read updated house bill here](#).

On July 24th, the House T&I Subcommittee on Highways and Transit held a hearing to examine the USDOT’s regulatory and administrative agenda. The session focused on the impact of federal regulations on transportation infrastructure projects and their statutory authority. [Watch here](#).

On July 23rd, the Senate Commerce, Science, and Transportation Subcommittee on Surface Transportation, Maritime, Freight, and Ports held a field hearing on the impact of the IJJA Lansing, Michigan. Amy O’Leary, Executive Director of SEMCOG, testified on the transformative effects of discretionary grants and emphasized the importance of continued formula funding for transportation infrastructure projects in Southeast Michigan. [Watch here](#).

On July 23, 2024, Senators Bill Cassidy (R-LA.) and Elizabeth Warren (D-MA.) introduced competing legislation in response to the Supreme Court’s decision to overturn Chevron deference. Cassidy’s bill aims to increase Congressional oversight in rulemaking, requiring agency heads to testify before

relevant committees and improve cost-benefit analyses, while Warren's "Stop Corporate Capture Act" seeks to restore agencies' ability to proceed with rulemaking under a "reasonable interpretation" of statutes and enhance public participation in the rulemaking process. [Read the Warren Bill here.](#) [Read the Cassidy Bill here.](#)

On July 23rd, GAO published a report on the USDOT's equity performance goals. The report evaluates DOT's progress in reducing transportation inequities and finds that while some goals align with federal performance practices, others lack near-term targets and clarity. [Read more.](#)

On July 22nd, the House passed the 2024 Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) by a bipartisan vote of 359-13. This bill, H.R. 8812, focuses on project authorizations, including levee systems for hurricane-prone areas. The Senate EPW Committee has approved its version, S. 4367, and is looking to secure floor time for consideration. [Read the Senate version here.](#) [Read the House version here.](#)

On July 21st, President Joe Biden announced via social media that he is dropping out of the presidential race, endorsing Vice President Kamala Harris as the Democratic nominee. Biden will serve out the remainder of his term. [Read more.](#)

On July 19th, the quadrennial policy platforms of the major political parties were released, highlighting a stark divide over EVs. The Republican Platform opposes Biden's EV mandates and Chinese vehicle imports, while the Democratic Platform advocates for eliminating carbon emissions in transportation by 2050 and significantly increasing investments in cleaner transit and EV infrastructure. [Read the Democratic Platform here.](#) [Read the Republican Platform here.](#)

On July 15th, former President Donald Trump announced Senator JD Vance (R-OH) as his vice-presidential running mate for the upcoming election. [Read more.](#)

On July 15, 2024, the Republican Party officially nominated Donald Trump as their presidential candidate for the third consecutive cycle. [Read more.](#)

On July 15, 2024, China escalated its dispute with the Biden administration by requesting the World Trade Organization to establish a panel to address concerns over US EV subsidies included in the Inflation Reduction Act. [Read more.](#)

On July 11th, House T&I lawmakers, Troy Nehls (R-TX) and Seth Moulton (D-MA), introduced a bipartisan rail safety bill, in response to the East Palestine, Ohio train derailment. This bill builds on previous legislation by allocating \$100 million for telematic systems to monitor railcar conditions and increasing funding for the railroad crossing elimination grant program to \$1.5 billion annually. [Read the Bill here.](#)

USDOT

On July 22nd, USDOT's OST hosted a webinar to assist communities in using data effectively for planning, development, and applying for federal grants. A second webinar focused on USDOT's Equitable Transportation Community (ETC) Explorer tool will be held on August 15th at 3:00 PM. [Register here.](#)

On July 22nd, USDOT Secretary Pete Buttigieg traveled to Los Angeles, California to celebrate the groundbreaking on major IJIA funded transportation infrastructure projects across the city. [Read more.](#)

On July 22nd, the Joint Office of Energy and Transportation published a report on integrating equity into EV infrastructure planning. It outlines strategies for community engagement, identifies areas of focus

using tools like the White House CEJST and DOT's ETC Explorer, and offers tips for consumer education and improving access to EV charging. [Read more.](#)

On July 21st, the FTA celebrated the 60th anniversary of the Urban Mass Transportation Act of 1964, which transformed transit systems across the US. Under the IIJA, which builds off of the 1964 act, a historic \$108 billion investment over five years has worked to support over 3,500 transit agencies. [Read more](#)

On July 19th, the FRA released its final accident report on the Norfolk Southern derailment in East Palestine, reaching conclusions like those of the NTSB. The report identified an overheated wheel bearing as the cause of the derailment and criticized Norfolk Southern's procedures and staffing related to hot box detectors. FRA urged Congress to pass rail safety legislation, while Norfolk Southern spokesperson Heather Garcia highlighted ongoing improvements, including the installation of additional hot bearing detectors. This report underscores the necessity for enhanced safety measures in the rail industry to prevent such incidents in the future. [Read more](#)

On July 17th, USDOT announced a \$5 billion in Large Bridge Project to restore, reconstruct, and repair thirteen major bridges across the US. This IIJA funding aims to improve the safety bridges and the efficiency of critical supply chain routes. [Read more.](#)

On July 17th, FHWA announced the FY 2024-2026 Nationally Significant Federal Lands and Tribal Projects (NSFLTP) Program, offering discretionary grants for the construction, reconstruction, or rehabilitation of transportation facilities within or adjacent to Federal or Tribal lands. [Read more](#)

On July 12th, FRA announced \$153 million in funding for the Restoration and Enhancement (R&E) Grant Program to boost opportunities to improve the intercity passenger rail network and enhance travel options for passengers. Applications are due by September 30th; MPOs are eligible to apply. [Read more.](#)

On July 11 and 12, USDOT hosted a Transportation and Climate Symposium. The event brought together transportation stakeholders and administration partners to celebrate climate progress and discuss continued action, recognizing climate champions and innovative solutions. [Read more.](#)

The FTA announced it will host a webinar on August 29th and on October 3rd to provide an overview of the updated Uniform Act. These sessions will cover the new rule's key aspects, its implications for transportation projects, and compliance requirements. Participants can register for these events to gain valuable insights into the updated regulations. [Register here.](#)

Congressional Hearings, Meetings, & Markups

- On July 25th, the Senate Appropriations Committee held a business meeting to mark up fiscal 2025 appropriations bills, including the draft Transportation-HUD bill. [Watch here.](#)
- On July 24th, the House T&I Subcommittee on Highways and Transit held a hearing on the USDOT regulatory and administrative agenda. [Watch here.](#)
- On July 23rd, the Senate Commerce, Science, and Transportation Subcommittee on Surface Transportation, Maritime, Freight, and Ports held a field hearing on the impact of the IIJA in Lansing City Hall, Lansing, Michigan. [Watch here.](#)
- On July 23rd, the House T&I Subcommittee on Railroads, Pipelines, and Hazardous Materials Transportation held a hearing on railroad safety. [Watch here.](#)

- On July 10th, the House Appropriations Committee held a markup for the FY 2025 THUD appropriations act. [Watch here](#).
- On July 10th, the Senate EPW Committee held a hearing to discuss the response on the Francis Scott Key Bridge Collapse. [Watch here](#).

National Transportation News

On July 25th, Andrew Gruber, Executive Director of the Wasatch Front Regional Council, offered a compelling argument on why both housing and transportation costs must be considered together when addressing affordability issues ([read here](#)).

On July 17th, Rhode Island became the first state to achieve the "built-out" status under the federal National Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (NEVI) program, marking a significant milestone despite the state's small highway network. This certification allows Rhode Island to utilize the remaining NEVI funds, estimated at over \$22 million, to build additional chargers. [Read more](#).

On July 10th, RAND released a report on the risks climate change poses to national critical functions. The report highlights how climate change could severely disrupt essential services such as transportation, water supply, electricity transmission, and medical care by 2050. It also identifies over 250 strategies to mitigate these risks. [Read more](#).

NOFOs

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

New (MPO Eligible)

- FRA's [Restoration & Enhancement \(R&E\) Grant Program](#)
 - **Description:** This program provides funding for projects aimed at initiating, restoring, or enhancing Intercity Rail Passenger Transportation operations.
 - **Deadline:** 9/30/2024
- USDOT's [Reconnecting Communities Pilot Program](#)
 - **Description:** The RCP Program aims to advance and support reconnection of communities divided by transportation infrastructure – with a priority on helping disadvantaged communities improve access to daily needs (jobs, schools, healthcare, grocery stores, and recreation).
 - **Deadline:** 9/30/2024
 - RCP Technical Assistance Center ([link here](#))
 - FHWA will host a Webinar on July 15th at 1:00 PM (ET) ([register here](#))
- FRA's [Railroad Crossing Elimination Grant Program](#)
 - **Description:** This program provides funding for highway-rail or pathway-rail grade crossing improvement projects that focus on improving the safety and mobility of people and goods.
 - **Deadline:** 9/23/2024

Policy Analysis

FY 2025 THUD Bill: Senate and House Version Comparative Analysis

[Read the Senate THUD bill summary here](#) & [Read House THUD bill summary here](#)

Overall Funding:

- **Senate Bill:** Provides \$110 billion in total funding for the DOT, including \$81.6 billion from obligation limitations and \$28.5 billion from discretionary funding.
- **House Bill:** Provides \$106.67 billion in total funding for USDOT, including a discretionary total of \$25.131, combined with \$81.539 billion from obligation limitations (i.e., 7.084 billion or 7.3% below the FY 2024 enacted level).

Highways and Bridges:

- **Senate Bill:** \$63.171 billion for federal-aid highways, including \$400 million for competitive bridge bundling grants and \$150 million for the Tribal Transportation Program
- **House Bill:** \$63.544 billion for federal-aid highways, including \$61.314 billion from the Highway Trust Fund and \$405 million for priority infrastructure needs, including tribal transportation and truck parking projects

Rail Safety & Amtrak:

- **Senate Bill:** \$3.46 billion for the FRA including \$2.63 billion for Amtrak and \$475 million for the CRISI Grant program
- **House Bill:** \$2.758 billion for the FRA, with \$2.125 billion for Amtrak and \$298 million for CRISI, including \$38.5 million for Community Project Funding.

Transit:

- **Senate Bill:** \$17 billion for the FTA, including \$2.262 billion for CIG.
- **House Bill:** \$15.307 billion for the FTA, including \$755 million for CIG and \$116 million for Community Project Funding for transit infrastructure projects

Maritime Administration and Federal Aviation Administration (FAA):

- **Senate Bill:**
 - Maritime Administration: \$1.14 billion, including \$200 million for the Port Infrastructure Development Program.
 - FAA: \$22 billion, including \$13.6 billion for operations, \$3.6 billion for facilities and equipment, and \$4.52 billion for AIP grants
- **House Bill:**
 - Maritime Administration: \$849 million, including \$72 million for the Port Infrastructure Development Program
 - FAA: \$21.657 billion, including \$13.588 billion for air traffic control operations, \$3.549 billion for facilities and equipment, and \$257 million for Community Project Funding for airport improvement projects

Key Differences:

RAISE Grants:

- **Senate Bill:** \$550 million, combined with \$1.5 billion from the IIJA, totaling \$2.05 billion.
- **House Bill:** Does not provide additional appropriations for RAISE or Mega grant programs, as these programs receive \$2.5 billion in advanced appropriations for FY25 through the IIJA.

Tribal and Rural Programs:

- **Senate Bill:** Includes \$25 million to support rural and tribal infrastructure advancements and a cost-share waiver for tribal programs.
- **House Bill:** Provides \$405 million for priority infrastructure needs, including tribal transportation and truck parking projects

Policy and Impact on Transportation: The Senate Bill provides more substantial funding and a wider range of investments, especially for modernizing and expanding our transportation infrastructure. In contrast, the House Bill takes a more cautious approach, emphasizing essential maintenance and safety improvements while also including measures to limit administrative actions and regulatory overreach.