

# The National Beat

## September 19<sup>th</sup>, 2024

### Sections

Federal Updates .....	1
USDOT .....	2
Congressional Hearings, Meetings, & Markups .....	3
AMPO’s Annual Conference—Policy Pitstop .....	3
NOFOs .....	5

### Federal Updates

On September 18th, House Speaker Mike Johnson expressed his intent to cut elements of the 2022 climate law if Republicans gain control of Congress. However, he acknowledged some green energy tax credits as beneficial, stating that the IRA should be modified with precision rather than completely dismantled. Johnson’s remarks signal potential GOP support for maintaining certain clean energy incentives while still targeting other parts of the law. [Read here.](#)

On September 18th, the Treasury Department proposed a rule to implement a tax credit covering up to 30 percent of the cost for businesses and individuals installing EV charging stations in low-income and rural areas. The credit, expanded under the IRA, can cover up to \$100,000 per charger for businesses and \$1,000 for individuals. The proposed rule defines eligible areas broadly, covering two-thirds of the US population, and clarifies that the credit applies per charging port, potentially offering significant savings for larger installations. [Read here.](#)

On September 18th, the US DOJ filed a \$100 million lawsuit against Grace Ocean Private Limited and Synergy Maritime PTE, the owners and managers of the cargo ship Dali, which crashed into the Francis Scott Key Bridge in Baltimore earlier this year. The lawsuit alleges the company knew of persistent electrical and mechanical issues that led to the crash but failed to address them. The collision, which caused six deaths and significant supply chain disruptions, was described by prosecutors as "entirely avoidable." [Read here.](#)

On September 18th, the House T&I Committee approved two transparency-related bills for Amtrak, including H.R. 8689, which aims to increase accountability following revelations of high executive salaries and bonuses. The committee also passed a bill reauthorizing limited counter-drone authorities and expanding a pilot program to allow state and local law enforcement agencies to trial the technology. [Read here.](#)

On September 18th, the House Energy and Commerce Committee approved H.R. 8449, a bill that mandates automakers to include AM radio receivers in vehicles, responding to moves by some brands like BMW and Tesla to eliminate them. The bill passed with a 45-2 vote and has bipartisan support,

especially from lawmakers citing the role of AM radio in emergency alerts and public information. [Read here.](#)

On September 16<sup>th</sup>, The U.S. Access Board has released a NPRM that could significantly impact transportation infrastructure planning, specifically regarding EV charging stations. This proposed rule aims to ensure EV charging stations are accessible to individuals with disabilities, as required under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the Architectural Barriers Act (ABA). Public comments are open until November 4th, 2024. [Read here.](#)

On September 13th, House Republican leaders announced a continuing appropriations bill to extend 2024 funding levels through March 28, 2025. The bill, which includes a voter citizenship proof requirement for voter registration, is currently stalled due to lack of votes. The proposed legislation has faced opposition, with concerns about the impact on U.S. military readiness and a veto threat from President Biden. House leaders are expected to revisit the issue next week. [Read here.](#)

On September 12<sup>th</sup>, the House passed H.R. 7980, which further restricts the amount of Chinese-originated minerals or components allowed in EVs to qualify for IRA tax credits. The bill passed with a 217-192 vote but faces opposition from the Biden Administration, which argues it would disrupt markets and increase consumer costs. On the same day, the Administration announced new tariffs on Chinese-made EVs and components, effective September 27, 2024, including a 100% tariff on EVs and a 25% tariff on lithium-ion batteries. [Read here.](#)

On September 11th, the Senate Commerce Committee held a hearing to consider four nominees for Amtrak's Board of Directors: David Capozzi, Samuel Lathem, Ronald Batory, and Elaine Clegg. The hearing focused on transparency in executive compensation, regional representation on the board, and service expansion. Discussions also addressed safety concerns and the role of the board in improving operational efficiency. While most of the nominees faced supportive questioning, Lathem faced scrutiny over past political activities and spending practices. The committee will vote on the nominees in the coming weeks. [Watch here.](#)

On September 9<sup>th</sup>, House Appropriations Chair Tom Cole indicated that Congress is unlikely to move forward with specific funding for the Baltimore bridge collapse until after the November elections. While some emergency relief may be included in the upcoming continuing resolution, Cole stated that action on Baltimore's Francis Scott Key Bridge would probably be delayed. The Biden administration had requested \$4 billion in June for the bridge collapse and other natural disasters. Cole confirmed that the Transportation Department's emergency relief funds are still available for ongoing efforts. [Read here](#) (if you hit a paywall with this link please contact Katie, [keconomou@ampo.org](mailto:keconomou@ampo.org) ).

## USDOT

On September 19<sup>th</sup>, FHWA announced that Kristin White has been appointed as Acting Federal Highway Administrator, effective September 11, 2024. White has played a pivotal role within the FHWA since May 2024 as Deputy Administrator and has overseen the agency's legal work as Chief Counsel. [Read here.](#)

On September 18<sup>th</sup>, USDOT celebrated the implementation of over 60,000 projects funded the IJJA. These projects span across the country, improving bridges, roads, ports, airports, transit, and rail

services. The efforts are aimed at strengthening the economy, enhancing supply chains, creating jobs, and expanding opportunities for communities and regions. [Read here.](#)

On September 16<sup>th</sup>, the UDOT announced nearly \$300 million in grants to modernize the nation's ferry systems, funded through the IJA. The grants will support 18 projects in 14 states, focusing on upgrading ferry vessels and terminals, including investments in electric ferries and low-emission technologies. This initiative aims to improve ferry services in both rural and urban communities, reducing greenhouse gas emissions and enhancing reliability. [Read here.](#)

On September 13<sup>th</sup>, FHWA announced \$802 million in Emergency Relief funds to support repairs to roads and bridges damaged by natural disasters and extreme weather events across 36 states, Guam, and Puerto Rico. These funds will assist in the recovery from events such as hurricanes, flooding, and mudslides, helping communities rebuild critical transportation infrastructure while making it more resilient to future climate impacts. [Read here.](#)

On September 13<sup>th</sup>, FHWA announced \$2 million in quick release Emergency Relief funds for the U.S. Forest Service in Puerto Rico to repair roadways damaged by Tropical Storm Ernesto in the El Yunque National Forest. The storm caused severe flooding, landslides, and damage to critical infrastructure. These funds will support immediate repairs to restore access and prevent delays in emergency services and ongoing recovery efforts. [Read here.](#)

### **Congressional Hearings, Meetings, & Markups**

- On September 19<sup>th</sup>, the Senate Commerce, Science, and Transportation Subcommittee on Oceans, Fisheries, Climate Change, and Manufacturing held a hearing on Coast Guard drug interdiction. [Watch here.](#)
- On September 18<sup>th</sup> the House Appropriations THUD subcommittee held a hearing on oversight of DOT, HUD, and Amtrak. [Watch here.](#)
- On September 18<sup>th</sup> the Senate Commerce, Science, and Transportation – full committee hearing on aviation cybersecurity threats. [Watch here.](#)
- On September 11<sup>th</sup>, the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation held a hearing to consider presidential nominations for the Amtrak Board of Directors. [Watch here.](#)
- On September 11<sup>th</sup>, the House T&I Committee held a hearing on the “Waters of the United States Implementation Post-Sackett Decision: Experiences and Perspectives”. [Watch here.](#)
- On September 11<sup>th</sup>, the Senate EPW Committee held a hearing on the “Nomination of Matthew James Marzano, of Illinois, to be a Member of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission for the term of five years expiring June 30, 2028”. [Watch here.](#)

## **AMPO's Annual Conference—Policy Pitstop**

We're excited to announce that our 2024 Policy Roadmap will be released soon, focusing on legislative priorities for MPOs as we approach reauthorization. Guided by comprehensive surveys and collaboration with our committees, this roadmap reflects the key challenges and solutions identified by the MPO community, helping to amplify our collective voice in Washington. [Read here.](#)

At the 2024 AMPO Annual Conference, don't miss the Policy Pitstop with Katie Economou, AMPO's Transportation Policy & Intergovernmental Affairs Manager, where she'll be answering questions on the

latest survey reports, the Highway Trust Fund primer, and our updated Policy Roadmap. AMPO's Federal Advocates, Devon Barnhart and Jason Pavluchuk, along with Brittney Kohler, the Legislative Director of Transportation and Infrastructure for the National League of Cities, will also be available at various times at the Policy Pitstop to discuss reauthorization and other key transportation policy topics. Be sure to connect with them!

If you're unable to make it to the 2024 Annual Conference to learn more about AMPO's Policy Roadmap, join us October 9th any time between 12 - 4 PM ET to get your questions answered! [Register Here](#).

## **AMPO's Legislative Priorities**

As we look to 2025 and beyond, we are advocating for several key priorities:

- **Increased Planning Funds:** Increasing both the total metropolitan planning funds and the federal share to better address the evolving needs and responsibilities of MPOs.
- **Reduced Local Match Requirements:** Reducing local match requirements for federal transportation funds, providing MPOs with greater flexibility to meet critical infrastructure needs and enhance transportation services for our communities.
- **Shifting from Discretionary to Formula-based Funding for Certain Programs:** This approach ensures a fair and predictable distribution of resources, enabling our members to plan and implement long-term transportation projects effectively. We are especially interested in hearing your feedback on which current discretionary programs you think would be more effective as formula programs.
- **MPOs Becoming Direct Recipients for Certain Federal Funds:** Increasing flexibility by granting MPOs direct recipient status for certain federal funds, streamlining the funding process and reducing bureaucratic hurdles.
- **Allowing the Carryover of Federal Funds:** Allowing the carryover of federal funds from one fiscal year to the next, facilitating the uninterrupted completion of long-term projects and consistent improvements to transportation infrastructure.

Another key focus is ensuring the long-term stability of the **Highway Trust Fund** and advocating for sustainable solutions that secure the future of this vital funding source.

## ***MPO Survey Reports and Issue Papers***

To support our advocacy efforts, we've developed detailed issue papers based on recent surveys. Topics include reducing match requirements, shifting to formula funding, managing carryover authority, and direct funding for MPOs.

Stay tuned for the upcoming survey reports and issue papers:

- Local Match Requirements for Federal Formula Funding Survey Report
- Discretionary Grants and MPO Insights Survey Report
- Direct Federal Funding and MPOs Survey Report
- Navigating the Future of the Highway Trust Fund Issue Paper

Also, be sure to revisit our 2023 Unobligated Balances and Project Timeline Survey Report. [Read here](#).

## ***AMPO's Strategic Advocacy***

As reauthorization nears, AMPO is working closely with policymakers and partners to prioritize MPO concerns. Our strategies include coalition building, grassroots mobilization, data-driven advocacy, and strategic communication to ensure our collective voice is heard.

### ***Share Your Stories: Get Involved***

We encourage MPOs to share stories that highlight the critical work they do and emphasize the importance of adequate resources and authority in effective transportation planning. These stories will help demonstrate the real-world impact MPOs have on communities and the significant role transportation funding plays in driving positive change. [Share your story here!](#)

We're looking forward to sharing more information in the coming weeks with our members and industry partners as we move towards reauthorization. If you have any questions, please reach out to Katie Economou at [keconomou@ampou.org](mailto:keconomou@ampou.org).

## **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 [ampou.org](http://ampou.org) under the "Resources" drop down.*

### **New (MPO Eligible)**

- FHWA's [Low Carbon Transportation Materials \(LCTM\) Program](#)
  - **Description:** This program supports the use of low-carbon materials in transportation projects to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Applications are due by November 25th; MPOs are eligible to apply.
    - FHWA will be hosting an informational webinar on the LCTM program on September 25th at 2:00 PM (ET) ([register here](#)).
  - **Deadline:** 11/25/2024
- HUD's [Pro Housing Program](#)
  - **Description:** to help communities remove barriers to affordable housing production and preservation, improve housing strategies, and develop sustainable housing policies.
  - **Deadline:** 10/15/2024