

# The National Beat

## December 12<sup>th</sup>, 2024

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### Federal Updates

On December 11<sup>th</sup>, Rick Crawford (R-AR) dropped out of the race for House T&I Committee chair, clearing the way for current Chair Sam Graves (R-MO) to continue leading the committee next Congress. Crawford's decision followed the Republican Steering Committee's waiver for Graves to bypass term limits, allowing him to serve a fourth term as chair. Crawford cited discussions with colleagues and the best interests of the conference as reasons for his withdrawal. He plans to focus on playing a leading role in reauthorization. [Read more](#). *If you're unable to access the article, please email Katie Economou at, [keconomou@ampo.org](mailto:keconomou@ampo.org).*

On December 11<sup>th</sup>, Representatives Mike Flood (R-NE) and Lisa Blunt Rochester (D-DE) introduced the **Housing Supply and Innovation Frameworks Act**. The bill directs HUD to develop best practice frameworks for zoning and land-use policies, providing local and state governments with tools to overcome barriers to housing development. The bill also establishes a Local Housing Policy Grant Pilot Program. This program provides funding to eligible entities to develop and implement housing policy plans that aim to increase the housing supply, improve affordability, and reduce barriers to housing development. This legislation aims to address the national housing shortage and support affordable housing initiatives. [Read more](#). *Learn more about this bill and its potential impacts below in the "AMPO Analysis" section of the National Beat.*

On December 11<sup>th</sup>, Senator Cynthia Lummis (R-WY) shared insights into her meeting with DOT secretary nominee Sean Duffy, who, along with President-elect Donald Trump, aims to prioritize roads and

bridges. Lummis and Duffy discussed topics such as surface transportation, EVs, truck parking, and potential corridors for commercial drone activity. [Read more.](#)

On December 11<sup>th</sup>, the EPA announced the official release of the MOVES5 Motor Vehicle Emissions Model. MOVES5 is EPA's latest tool for estimating emissions from cars, trucks, buses, and motorcycles, supporting SIPs and transportation conformity analyses outside of California. The new model incorporates updated regulations, expanded data, and advanced methodologies. A two-year grace period, ending December 11, 2026, allows for transition to MOVES5 as the required model for conformity analyses. [Read more.](#)

On December 10<sup>th</sup>, the House overwhelmingly approved the **Thomas R. Carper Water Resources Development Act of 2024 (WRDA)** with a 399-18 vote. The bill authorizes projects for ports, waterways, flood protection, and ecosystem restoration while streamlining Army Corps of Engineers processes. Additional measures, including the Fiscally Responsible Highway Funding Act and the Economic Development Reauthorization Act, were also attached (learn more on these acts below). The legislation now moves to the Senate for final approval before reaching the White House. [Read more.](#) *Learn more about this bill and its potential impacts below in the "AMPO Analysis" section of the National Beat.*

On December 10<sup>th</sup>, Politico reported that congressional leaders are negotiating disaster aid as part of a stopgap funding bill to avoid a government shutdown before December 20<sup>th</sup>. While both parties agree on the need for disaster funding, disputes remain over the specifics of the White House's \$98 billion request. The stopgap measure, expected to last until March, aims to maintain federal operations. [Read more.](#) *If you're unable to access the article, please email Katie Economou at, [keconomou@ampo.org](mailto:keconomou@ampo.org).*

On December 10<sup>th</sup>, Politico reported that President-elect Donald Trump announced plans to fast-track permits and environmental approvals for investors spending \$1 billion or more in the US. The proposal aims to ease regulatory processes. has nominated officials to lead key agencies, including the DOI, DOE, and EPA, to support his agenda of rolling back regulations. [Read more.](#) *If you're unable to access the article, please email Katie Economou at, [keconomou@ampo.org](mailto:keconomou@ampo.org).*

On December 9<sup>th</sup>, House passed H.R. 8689 to increase transparency on Amtrak executive compensation. The bill requires Amtrak to publicly disclose annual bonuses for its CEO, president, and other top executives, along with explanations for those payouts. The measure follows criticism of Amtrak CEO Stephen Gardner's \$1.1 million salary and bonuses while the railroad faces financial struggles. The Senate must pass a companion bill for the legislation to advance. [Read more.](#)

On December 6<sup>th</sup>, Politico reported that Sean Duffy, President-elect Donald Trump's nominee for Transportation Secretary, is assembling a team of advisers as he prepares for Senate confirmation hearings. Duffy has tapped Pete Meachum, his former chief of staff and a veteran GOP strategist, and Kyle Plotkin, a former aide to Sen. Josh Hawley and Gov. Bobby Jindal, to assist with his nomination process. Duffy is scheduled to meet with key senators as he builds bipartisan support for his confirmation. [Read more.](#) *If you're unable to access the article, please email Katie Economou at, [keconomou@ampo.org](mailto:keconomou@ampo.org).*

On December 6<sup>th</sup>, Eno Transportation Weekly reported on President-elect Trump's plans to revisit the issue of presidential impoundment, which allows a president to withhold congressionally approved budget authority. While the Impoundment Control Act of 1974 largely curtailed this power, historical

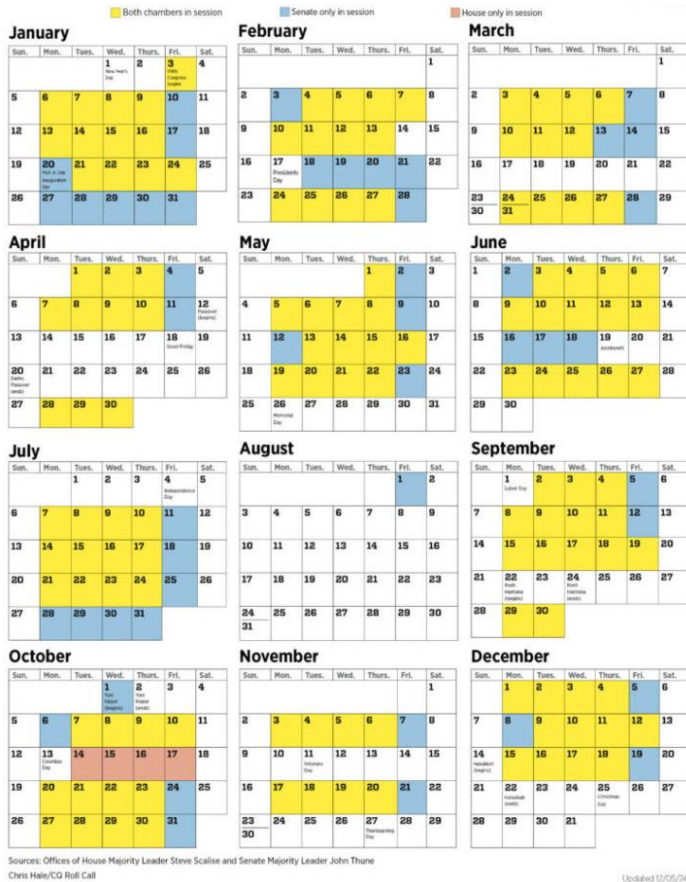
court decisions, including the State Highway Commission of Missouri v. Volpe and Train v. City of New York, have consistently ruled impoundments illegal under specific statutory frameworks. Trump's approach is expected target limits, especially for infrastructure programs containing 'no-year' appropriations, which are harder to classify as impoundments. Significant unused infrastructure funding from the IIJA may become a focal point for his administration. [Read more.](#) [Read more.](#) *If you're unable to access the article, please email Katie Economou at, [keconomou@ampo.org](mailto:keconomou@ampo.org).*

On December 6<sup>th</sup>, Eno Transportation Weekly reported that House Republicans will decide next week whether Sam Graves (R-MO) or Rick Crawford (R-AR) will chair the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee in the 119th Congress. Graves, who currently holds the position, received a 2-year waiver on GOP term limits for committee leadership, allowing him to seek reelection as chair. The decision will be made by the House GOP Steering Committee, which evaluates candidates on their legislative vision, party collaboration, and fundraising performance. The committee's recommendation will then go to the full House Republican Conference for ratification. [Read more.](#) *If you're unable to access the article, please email Katie Economou at, [keconomou@ampo.org](mailto:keconomou@ampo.org).*

On December 5<sup>th</sup>, Politico reported that Elon Musk and Vivek Ramaswamy, leaders of the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) under President-elect Donald Trump, are facing challenges over potential federal spending cuts. Musk and Ramaswamy lack the authority to directly cut funding but aim to make government operations more efficient. Tensions are expected as Congress and the Trump administration navigate priorities. [Read more.](#) [Read more.](#) *If you're unable to access the article, please email Katie Economou at, [keconomou@ampo.org](mailto:keconomou@ampo.org).*

On December 5<sup>th</sup>, the EPA Inspector General's audit raised concerns about the agency's oversight of the \$5 billion Clean School Bus Program, funded under the IIJA. The audit found no specific instances of fraud or abuse but warned that EPA's lack of oversight increases risks. Of the \$836 million distributed in 2022 for clean buses, only 6% of recipients have completed the required documentation to confirm buses and infrastructure are operational. The EPA has pledged to address the audit's recommendations, including issuing new fund management guidelines by spring. [Read more.](#)

On December 5<sup>th</sup>, both chambers of Congress published their schedules for the new year. This schedule positions Congress for a fast-paced start and a packed legislative year. The initial agenda includes hearings and votes on President-elect Donald Trump's Cabinet nominees, two budget reconciliation packages, and likely a long-term government funding bill. Below are the key dates from the House and Senate calendar. [Read more.](#)



On December 3<sup>rd</sup>, House and Senate negotiators reached an agreement on the biennial water resources reauthorization law and three additional public works bills. The Water Resources and Development Act of 2024 prioritizes \$17 billion in new projects for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Notably, the Fiscally Responsible Highway Funding Act reallocates \$2 billion in unused TIFIA loan program funds to states for highway projects, allowing greater flexibility under the STBG Program. This transfer is designed to clear longstanding balances and streamline funding usage. [Read more.](#)

On December 3<sup>rd</sup>, the House Republican Steering Committee granted Rep. Sam Graves (R-Mo.) a rare waiver to bypass party term limits, keeping him eligible to lead the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee. The decision allows Graves to compete against Rep. Rick Crawford (R-Ark.) for the chairmanship, with a vote scheduled next week. Graves argued his experience and readiness to advance President-elect Trump’s ambitious infrastructure agenda make him the right choice. Crawford countered by focusing on fiscal reforms, including potential new fees on electric vehicles. The outcome remains uncertain as the Steering Committee deliberates. [Read more.](#)

On December 2<sup>nd</sup>, the DOE conditionally approved a \$7.5 billion loan for Stellantis and Samsung SDI’s joint venture, StarPlus, to build two EV battery plants in Indiana. The factories are expected to power 670,000 EVs annually and create up to 6,000 jobs during construction and operation. [Read more.](#)

## USDOT

On December 11th, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) announced the opening of a Call for Ideas for the next round of the Every Day Counts ([EDC](#)) program. The program seeks innovative, market-ready, and proven yet underutilized solutions that have the potential to transform transportation. Stakeholders are encouraged to submit their ideas by February 4th, 2025. [Submit proposals here](#).

On December 9<sup>th</sup>, USDOT announced significant progress in rebuilding US bridges, nearly doubling its original goal of repairing or replacing 10 economically significant bridges. Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg highlighted 18 major bridge projects receiving over \$100 million each through programs like the IIJA's Bridge Investment Program. [Read more](#).

On December 6<sup>th</sup>, FHWA the recipients of the FY 2022 and 2023 Highway Use Tax Evasion (HUTE) grants. These grants aim to support state efforts in combating highway use tax evasion through audits, enforcement, training, and inter-state collaboration. A total of six lead states and numerous participating states received funding to enhance compliance, enforcement, and education initiatives. [Read more](#).

On December 5<sup>th</sup>, FHWA announced the FY23 grant selections for its Roadside Pollinator Program (RPP). The program supports state and tribal initiatives to establish and enhance pollinator habitats along transportation corridors. Grants awarded ranged from \$134,382 to \$150,000, fostering pollinator conservation efforts nationwide. [Read more](#).

On December 3<sup>rd</sup>, FTA announced a NOFO for \$5 million through the Technology Transfer (T2) Program. Applications are due by February 11th, 2025, at 11:59 PM ET. The program, which offers up to 100% federal funding for eligible projects, is open to MPOs. T2 aims to advance FTA's research by supporting the adoption of innovations that improve transit safety, equitable mobility, operations, and clean energy use, while promoting the commercialization of US-developed technologies. [Read more](#).

On December 3<sup>rd</sup>, USDOT announced nearly \$4.85 million in grants under the United States Marine Highway Program (USMHP) to support five marine highway projects. These grants aim to enhance goods movement via navigable waterways, reduce landside congestion, and lower carbon emissions, while supporting local economies and strengthening supply chains. The grants align with the administration's "Build America, Buy America" requirements under IIJA. [Read more](#).

On December 3<sup>rd</sup>, Politico reported that Acting FHWA Administrator Kristin White expressed concern that the incoming Trump administration may target the DOT's Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) Program for cuts. White warned that eliminating the program, which supports minority- and women-owned businesses in federally funded transportation projects, could lead to significant job losses and business closures. Established in 1983 and reauthorized under the IIJA, the DBE program mandates that at least 10 percent of highway and transit funds be allocated to DBE-certified firms to address past discrimination. [Read more](#). *If you're unable to access the article, please email Katie Economou at, [keconomou@ampo.org](mailto:keconomou@ampo.org).*

On December 3<sup>rd</sup>, Politico reported that USDOT plans to issue new guidance on EV charge standards to incorporate Tesla's charging technology, now formalized as the J3400 standard by SAE International. Acting FHWA Administrator Kristin White confirmed the guidance will provide clarifications under existing rules rather than new rulemaking. The move aligns with widespread industry adoption of Tesla's technology. White also noted uncertainty about the future of the Joint Office of Energy and

Transportation under the Trump administration, emphasizing its broader mandate beyond EVs. [Read more.](#)

On December 2<sup>nd</sup>, FHWA announced over \$24 million in grants to 16 projects across 14 states through the Prioritization Process Pilot Program (PPPP). These grants aim to enhance transparency, equity, and data-driven methodologies in transportation project selection. Recipients include a mix of State DOTs and MPOs, with projects focusing on climate resilience, community engagement, and regional transportation equity. The funding supports innovative tools, stakeholder-driven processes, and improvements to long-range transportation plans. [Read more.](#)

On December 2<sup>nd</sup>, Politico highlighted 7 USDOT regulations potentially at risk of rollback under the incoming administration, given its focus on reducing business costs and regulatory burdens. Vulnerable rules include those requiring airlines to disclose add-on fees and issue cash compensation for delays, mandating two-person train crews, and revising fuel efficiency standards. Proposed initiatives like tax credits for EV chargers and rules on seat selection priority on flights may also face cuts. Freight rail safety regulations and alternative fuel policies are similarly likely focus areas. [Read more.](#) *If you're unable to access the article, please email Katie Economou at, [keconomou@ampo.org](mailto:keconomou@ampo.org).*

On November 25<sup>th</sup>, NHTSA finalized a rule requiring all new light-duty vehicles to include automatic braking systems with pedestrian detection and forward collision warning systems by September 1, 2029. Mandated under the 2021 infrastructure law, the rule establishes performance standards for crash avoidance technologies, including driver alerts, braking system efficacy, false activation tests, and malfunction detection. Automakers previously pledged to include automatic emergency braking in 95% of vehicles by 2022. [Read more.](#)

## Congressional Hearings, Meetings, and Markups

- On December 12<sup>th</sup>, the Senate Commerce, Science, and Transportation held a business meeting to consider nominations, including the four Amtrak Board of Directors nominees and the Federal Maritime Commission nominee. [Agenda here.](#)
- On December 12<sup>th</sup>, the Senate Commerce, Science, and Transportation Subcommittee on Aviation Safety, Operations, and Innovation held a hearing on air traffic control. [Watch here.](#)
- On December 10<sup>th</sup>, the Senate Homeland Security and Government Affairs Subcommittee on Investigations held a hearing on Coast Guard oversight. [Watch here.](#)
- On December 10<sup>th</sup>, the House Homeland Security Subcommittee on Counterterrorism, Law Enforcement, and Intelligence held a hearing on safeguarding the US. from unmanned aerial systems. [Watch here.](#)

## National Transportation News

On December 10<sup>th</sup>, Stellantis and Chinese battery manufacturer CATL finalized a €4.1 billion joint venture to build a lithium iron phosphate battery plant in Spain. is leveraging such projects to attract more automakers and battery manufacturers while positioning itself as a hub for green transition investments. The announcement follows Spain's evolving stance on EU duties on Chinese EVs and aligns with other Chinese-European collaborations in the automotive sector. [Read more.](#)



On December 9<sup>th</sup>, AMPO joined the Local Officials for Transportation (LOT) Coalition in a meeting with USDOT [Deputy Secretary Polly Trottenberg](#). The LOT Coalition, which includes AMPO, [NLC](#), [USCM](#), [NACo](#), [NADO](#), and [NARC](#), brought together principals from each organization to discuss federal-local collaboration, IIJA implementation, and reauthorization. Representing AMPO were Board President and CAMPO Executive Director Ashby Johnson, who served as the principal attendee, alongside AMPO staff. Deputy Secretary Trottenberg highlighted USDOT's commitment to supporting local and regional grantees and the transformative potential of IIJA investments. She outlined key considerations for reauthorization, including showcasing IIJA outcomes, simplifying grant processes, and addressing staffing challenges for smaller jurisdictions. She also emphasized the importance of integrating transportation, housing, and land use policies to achieve more comprehensive planning and system efficiency.

On December 9<sup>th</sup>, Bay Area California officials are advancing plans for a potential 2026 tax measure to fund local transit systems, including BART, SFMTA, and Caltrain, as federal Covid relief funds are set to expire. MTC is testing two proposals: a 10-year, half-cent sales tax for core BART counties, and a combination of a 30-year half-cent sales tax and a 9-cent per square-foot parcel tax. Polling results in February will determine which proposal moves forward for legislative approval. [Read more](#).

On December 2<sup>nd</sup>, California State Sen. Dave Cortese introduced a bill to restrict the sale of retired diesel trains, following Caltrain's decision to sell decommissioned diesel locomotives to Peru. Caltrain's sale, brokered with the help of the US State Department, involved 19 locomotives and 90 gallery cars. The bill, currently in an early stage, will be developed further ahead of the legislative deadline in May. [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)

- **FTA's [FY25 Technology Transfer \(T2\) Program](#)**
  - **Description:** funding for a cooperative agreement to promote the deployment of successful transit innovation research findings. The overarching goal of this program is to highlight promising innovation research projects that will improve public transportation and enable transit agencies to implement these results in their operations.
  - **Deadline:** 2/11/2025

### Upcoming NOFOs (MPO Eligible)

- FTA's [All Stations Accessibility Program](#): Expected December, 2024.
- OST's [Rural and Tribal Assistance Pilot Program](#): Expected December, 2024.
- Maritime Administration's [Port Infrastructure Development Program \(PIDP\)](#): Expected December, 2024.

- USDOT's [Reduction of Truck Emissions at Port Facilities \(RTEPF\) Program](#): Expected December, 2024.

## AMPO Analysis

### Thomas R. Carper Water Resources Development Act of 2024 (WRDA)

The [Thomas R. Carper Water Resources Development Act of 2024 \(WRDA\)](#), along with its accompanying provisions like the Fiscally Responsible Highway Funding Act, reflects significant federal efforts to optimize infrastructure investment and address inefficiencies in existing funding mechanisms. Below is an analysis focusing on the legislative provisions and their implications for MPOs. Read the section-by-section bill summary [here](#) and the House T&I Committee's press release [here](#).

#### Key Provisions of the WRDA Bill

- Transfer of TIFIA Funding to STBG:
  - Approximately \$1.8 billion in unobligated TIFIA contract authority will be reallocated to STBG formula funding, which offers broad eligibility and flexibility for transportation projects. ([See page 24](#); [see page 475](#))
  - Future Allocations: 75% of unused TIFIA contract authority from FY 2025 and FY 2026 will also be reallocated under the same framework ([See pages 477-479](#)).
- Streamlining obligation limitation and addressing August Redistribution:
  - By updating how obligation limitations are distributed, the bill ensures upfront formula funding for states, reducing dependency on the August Redistribution process. ([See page 25](#); [See pages 475-478](#))
- Extended period of availability for reallocated funds:
  - Reallocated STBG funds will remain available for obligation through FY 2028 (for FY 2025 funds) and FY 2029 (for FY 2026 funds), providing flexibility for long-term projects. ([See page 27](#); [see page 478](#))
- Continued support for local infrastructure through formula funding:
  - Funds redistributed through STBG remain subject to existing MPO suballocation requirements under 23 U.S.C. §133(d). ([See page 26](#); [see page 475](#))
  - The provision could increase STBG formula funding availability for MPOs and their local government partners, providing additional resources for projects that align with regional priorities. ([See page 27](#))

#### Potential Considerations and Implications for MPOs:

- MPOs could benefit from the predictable allocation of formula funds under STBG.
- The reallocation of TIFIA funds could make more resources available for MPOs to plan and execute projects eligible under STBG.
- The availability of obligation for up to 4 fiscal years gives states and MPOs more time to plan, coordinate, and implement long-term transportation projects without the risk of losing unused funds.



- While MPOs receive a share of formula funding through suballocation, collaboration with state DOTs will be critical to ensure regional priorities are addressed effectively.
- STBG funding is known for its broad eligibility and flexibility, allowing States and MPOs to allocate funds to a wide range of transportation projects. Eligible uses include roadway improvements, transit investments, multimodal infrastructure, and projects that address environmental sustainability and safety.

The WRDA bill, with its reallocation of unused TIFIA funding and update to the obligation limitation processes, represents an opportunity for State DOTs and MPOs to enhance their impact in transportation planning and project delivery with more resources. By addressing funding bottlenecks and providing additional resources, the legislation could empower State DOTs and MPOs to advance critical projects that improve mobility, safety, and economic competitiveness at the regional level.

MPOs that receive STBG funds should position themselves to effectively leverage these changes, advocating for regional priorities and building the capacity to implement transformative projects that align with federal goals.

## The Housing Supply and Innovation Frameworks Act

On December 11th, Representatives Mike Flood (R-NE) and Lisa Blunt Rochester (D-DE) introduced the [Housing Supply and Innovation Frameworks Act](#). The bill directs HUD to develop best practice frameworks for zoning and land-use policies, providing local and state governments with tools to overcome barriers to housing development.

The bill also establishes a **Local Housing Policy Grant Pilot Program**. This program provides funding to eligible entities to develop and implement housing policy plans that aim to increase the housing supply, improve affordability, and reduce barriers to housing development. This legislation aims to address the national housing shortage and support affordable housing initiatives. [Read the press release here](#), the [full bill text](#), and a [one-pager on the bill here](#).

### Key Provisions of the Housing Supply and Innovation Frameworks Act

- Establishment of Local Housing Policy Grant Pilot Program
  - Planning Grants: Provides competitive grants to eligible entities for developing and evaluating comprehensive housing policy plans ([Page 5](#)).
  - Implementation Grants: Funds entities implementing housing policy plans aimed at increasing housing supply, affordability, and accessibility ([Page 5](#)).
- Funding
  - Authorizes \$300 million annually for FY 2025–2030 to support the program ([Page 14](#)).
  - Grant recipients must provide non-federal contributions equal to the amount of the grant (i.e., 100% non-federal match).
    - *Note:* the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development has the discretion to reduce the matching requirement based on the available resources of the eligible entity. ([Page 9](#)).
- Eligible Entities
  - Includes states, political subdivisions, coalitions of jurisdictions, Indian Tribes, and Native Hawaiian organizations ([Page 2–3](#)).

- Eligibility requires demonstration of rising housing costs or shortages and community engagement in developing or implementing plans ([Page 3](#)).
- Grant Prioritization ([Page 7](#))
  - Align housing development with local transit and employment hubs.
  - Reduce barriers to affordable housing development.
  - Coordinate housing planning at a regional scale to equitably distribute affordable housing across jurisdictions.
  - Leverage other funding sources, such as federal, state, local, or private funding.
- HUD Guidance and Learning Network
  - HUD Guidance: Issues recommendations to improve housing supply elasticity, reduce barriers, and address housing segregation by income and race ([Page 8](#)).
  - Learning Network: Established to facilitate problem-solving and share best practices among eligible entities ([Page 12](#)).

### Potential Considerations and Implications for MPOs

- Although not explicitly listed as eligible entities, MPOs could partner with states or local governments to provide technical expertise, regional data, and planning support for grant applications ([Pages 2-3](#)).
  - \*Note: MPOs may qualify as political subdivisions within the state.
  - \*Note: MPOs/AMPO could consider advocating for explicit eligibility inclusion in future amendments to the Act.
- Integration of Housing, Land Use, and Transportation
  - MPOs’ existing role in regional transportation planning positions them well to contribute to housing policy plans that align housing affordability with transit access and job markets. (See [page 7](#) on coordinating housing development with transit and workforce)
- The bill’s emphasis on regional housing coordination and equitable distribution ([page 7](#)) complements MPOs’ regional convening role.
- The bill aligns with federal goals that MPOs address such as expanding transit-oriented development, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and addressing equity.

MPOs could consider further positioning themselves as critical partners in housing policy development to help drive solutions that integrate housing affordability with sustainable transportation planning.