

NEXT STOP ↗

Reauthorization

AMPO'S POLICY ROADMAP III



Welcome to Providence

Dear AMPO Members and Partners,

Welcome to Providence and the 2025 AMPO Annual Conference! This gathering brings together dedicated leaders and colleagues who are committed to strengthening communities across the United States through forward-looking, collaborative transportation planning.

Where we stand today: This year's conference comes at a pivotal moment. Congress is moving quickly on the next surface transportation reauthorization. Committee staff are working through policy details and funding levels, and lawmakers are weighing priorities while balancing budget pressures and local needs. Authorizing committees in both chambers are preparing to release draft text, with markups and floor action expected to follow soon after. With the current Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) set to expire on September 30, 2026, decisions made in the next 12 months will define the future of transportation planning for years to come.

Over the past two years, AMPO and its members have built a strong foundation for this work. The AMPO Policy Committee, guided by input from members around the country, has helped shape a policy agenda that reflects the realities and goals of MPOs across the nation. With this direction, AMPO has refined our core policy priorities, strengthened coalitions with our national partners, built new alliances, and developed robust data and local success stories that prove what MPOs do best: bring people together to design cost-effective, community-driven solutions that keep regions moving and economies growing.

AMPO's role has been to support and amplify your efforts. Over the past year, AMPO has elevated member voices through Capitol Hill meetings and fly-ins, provided policy tools to help communicate your impact, and worked to ensure that regional priorities are front and center in national policy discussions. None of this would be possible without the active participation, input, and leadership of AMPO's members.

But the work is not finished. As Congress advances reauthorization, the success of AMPO's legislative priorities depends on maintaining this momentum through final passage and beyond. Reauthorization is not won in Washington alone. It is secured when every region shows how federal investments translate into better roads, safer streets, thriving businesses, and stronger local economies.

Thank you for your partnership and for the dedication you bring to your communities each day. Together, MPOs are turning planning into progress...and progress into results.

Our work is far from done. The next phase requires action from all MPOs to share your stories, uplift AMPO's priorities, and help deliver a reauthorization that works for MPOs and the people they serve.

**The next step is reauthorization.
Let's get to work!**

With deep appreciation,



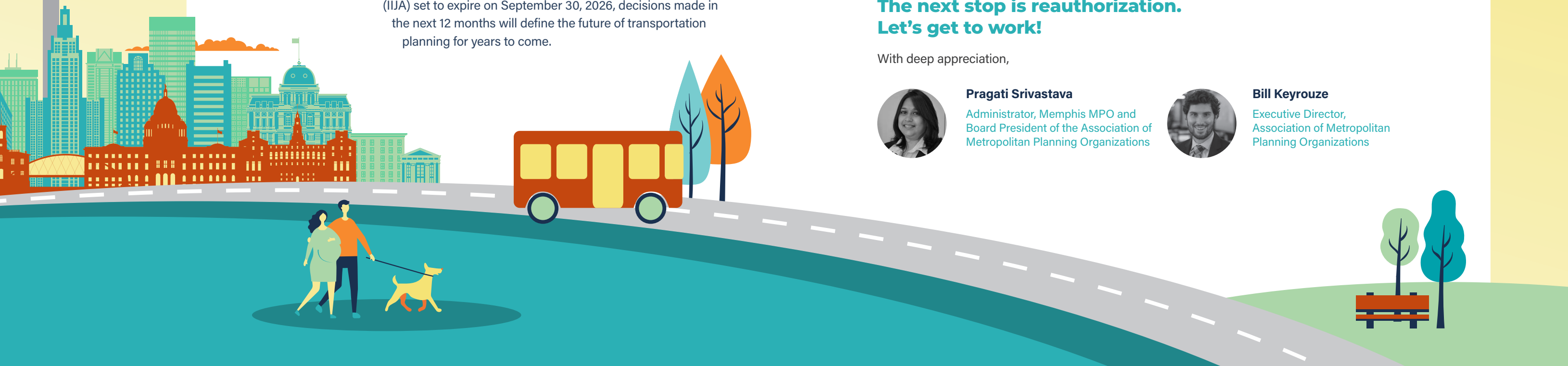
Pragati Srivastava

Administrator, Memphis MPO and
Board President of the Association of
Metropolitan Planning Organizations



Bill Keyrouze

Executive Director,
Association of Metropolitan
Planning Organizations





What is Reauthorization?

Federal surface transportation **reauthorization** is the process Congress uses to renew, fund, and update the programs that build and maintain the nation's roads, bridges, transit, and multimodal networks. Reauthorization is one of the most important tools Congress has to shape national transportation policy. Typically passed every five to six years, these bills **establish funding levels, define federal priorities, and guide how transportation investments are made.** These decisions influence which types of projects are eligible, what outcomes are prioritized (such as safety, mobility, economic development, etc.), and how regions access and manage federal dollars.

For MPOs, reauthorization is a **key opportunity** to improve the funding and policy frameworks that impact day-to-day operations and long-term regional planning. It directly affects how MPOs are funded, how flexibly they can use resources, and how much authority they have in shaping transportation decisions for their communities.



Where We Stand

As we stand in 2025, Congress is rewriting this blueprint for the future. **AMPO is working to ensure the next reauthorization strengthens MPOs' ability to lead and deliver results.** What we do together in the next year will shape how every region grows, moves, and thrives until the passage of the following bill.

Since Cleveland 2023, AMPO has:

- Identified actionable solutions to pressing challenges by conducting in-depth member surveys.
- Provided members and policymakers with detailed issue papers and policy briefs grounded in data and real-world examples.
- Expanded our reach and influence by building new partnerships with national organizations and key industry stakeholders aligned with MPO goals.
- Elevated the voice of MPOs at the federal level by engaging directly with Congressional leaders to ensure regional priorities are understood and addressed.
- Launched the MPO Institute, providing a platform for peer learning, capacity building, and a deeper understanding of MPO roles among both practitioners and policy stakeholders.

Since Salt Lake City 2024, we accelerated our efforts:

- Ensured our platform reflects the needs of MPOs by refining legislative priorities based on member input and feedback.
- Deepened partnerships by moving from coordination to joint action, strengthening efforts with the Local Officials for Transportation (LOT) Coalition (NLC, NACo, NARC, NADO, USCM, AMPO) and other organizations to align and amplify local and regional priorities at the federal level.
- Expanded our influence on Capitol Hill by ramping up direct engagement with Congress and maintaining regular contact with key offices and authorizing committee leadership.
- Secured a seat at the federal policymaking table by building trusted relationships with the new USDOT leadership team, helping ensure MPOs shape national guidance.
- Connected our members directly with federal decision makers through targeted Hill fly-ins that highlight MPO leadership and on-the-ground impact.
- Made engagement easier and more effective by releasing new messaging tools, templates, and the MPO Engagement Toolkit to support every MPO in telling its story and advancing its goals.

And much more, all designed to make sure regional priorities are front and center as reauthorization takes shape.

In Providence 2025, we turn this groundwork into action:

- Now is the time to show Congress why MPOs are essential: We bring communities together, break down jurisdictional silos, and turn transportation dollars into local outcomes that keep the nation moving forward.

OUR REAUTHORIZATION ITINERARY

HERE'S HOW REAUTHORIZATION IS SHAPING UP:

SUMMER-FALL 2025:

Congressional committees in both chambers are developing legislative proposals and drafting bill text. This is a key window for stakeholder engagement.

FALL 2025:

Introduction of reauthorization bills is expected, along with committee markups.

WINTER 2025-26:

Potential floor consideration in both chambers, likely beginning in the House, followed by conference negotiations to reconcile differences between the House and Senate versions.

SEPTEMBER 30, 2026:

The IIJA expires. While Congress is working toward passing a new law before this deadline, one or more short-term extensions are possible if negotiations are delayed.

Your continued engagement during this process is essential.
What you do regionally will help shape what gets included nationally.

Mileposts:

MPO's Core Legislative Priorities

Strong planning and coordination leads to smart, cost-effective infrastructure investments. To deliver that, **MPOs need the funding, flexibility, and authority that match the scale of their responsibility.** Our message to Congress is clear and consistent:

Planning: The Blueprint for Success

MPO planning ensures federal transportation dollars are invested in solutions that get people to work, deliver goods, and build strong American communities. As we say:

"You wouldn't build a house without a blueprint—so why build the transportation networks that connect our communities, drive our economy, and shape our future without one? Planning is that blueprint. It guides every step, aligns investments with local and national priorities, and ensures that every project is designed for long-term success."

Planning is a streamlining force.

By identifying environmental, community, and engineering challenges early in the project development process, MPO-led planning helps avoid costly redesigns, accelerates project delivery, and reduces risk for state and local partners. **Planning is strengthening the public trust** by engaging communities upfront and aligning projects with clear long-term goals.

Planning is turning vision into efficiency.





It identifies regionally and nationally significant infrastructure projects, sequences them effectively, and ensures that federal funds are spent on solutions that last. Without planning, projects risk cost overruns, delays, or misalignment with community needs. Investing in planning is one of the most cost-effective ways to ensure every federal transportation dollar delivers maximum value.

THE CHALLENGE

MPOs provide the blueprints for smart transportation, but they cannot deliver on their full potential without adequate resources and authority. Metropolitan Planning (PL) funding is currently less than 1% of total federal formula allocations and has not kept pace with MPOs' rising responsibilities and transportation system needs. The current structure makes this work harder than it should be. MPOs rely on state DOTs to pass through funds, which can add extra steps and delay access. The 20% local match requirement also leaves small or fiscally distressed regions struggling to access available planning funds.

Streamlining access and modernizing PL funds will help MPOs deliver results faster and with greater impact.

OUR PROPOSAL:

-  **Increase PL Funding:** Increase to 3% of total formula allocations and establish a funding floor to support small and rural regions.
-  **Streamline Access:** Allow MPOs to receive PL funds directly, with an opt-out for those that prefer the current state-administered model.
-  **Remove Barriers:** Reduce fiscal burden by eliminating the local match requirement for PL funds, thereby recognizing that federally mandated planning should not create an unfunded mandate for local governments.
-  **Modernize Eligible Uses:** Reflect today's need to plan for the full project lifecycle—including fiscal administration of local projects, preliminary design, economic development studies tied to transportation, local technical assistance, and critical data procurement—maximizing every federal dollar.

By modernizing planning funds, MPOs will be better equipped to support local governments, anticipate challenges, keep projects moving, and meet national goals. Strong planning delivers tangible results: safer roads, quicker commutes, and faster project delivery that benefits every community, from urban centers to rural towns.

Empower Regional Decision-Making

Local and regional governments are on the front lines of the nation's transportation system. They plan for, own, and maintain more than 75% of the nation's road miles, yet on average receive only 14% of federal transportation funds through suballocations.¹ Despite this critical responsibility, local and regional entities often have limited influence in determining which projects move forward with federal funding. As a result, the communities that manage much of the system are not always able to directly shape the investments that influence daily travel, safety outcomes, and economic growth.

Transportation investment is most successful when federal, state, and local partners work together. MPOs are a proven means to do that. They bring together towns, cities, counties, transit providers, state officials, and other key stakeholders to identify shared priorities and plan for regional growth. MPOs contribute local knowledge, data, and community input that ensures projects meet real-world needs.

¹ Adie Tomer and Ben Swedberg, "Connecting the Dots: A survey of state transportation planning, investment, and accountability practices," Brookings Institution, November 12, 2024, <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/connecting-the-dots-a-survey-of-state-transportation-planning-investment-and-accountability-practices/>.

THE CHALLENGE

Currently, even when MPOs have fulfilled their responsibilities—identifying regional priorities, securing local consensus, and programming projects in their Transportation Improvement Programs (TIPs)—those projects can still face delays or reprogramming due to broader administrative processes, procedural bottlenecks, or shifting priorities at the state level. These systemic hurdles, often outside MPO control, contribute to unobligated balances, slow project delivery, and uncertainty for local partners.

A clearly defined and strengthened regional role in project selection and programming would improve transparency, reduce duplication, and ensure that federal dollars move efficiently to projects that are ready to advance and reflect community priorities. Strengthening MPO authority and coordination not only accelerates project delivery but also builds public trust and maximizes the impact of limited federal resources.

OUR PROPOSAL:



Clarify and Strengthen Project Selection Roles: Ensure that MPOs and federally designated RTPOs have clearly defined authority to select projects funded by suballocated programs (e.g., STBG, CMAQ, CRP). In some states, ambiguity in procedures or state-level administrative overrides can delay or alter projects selected through the MPO process. Clear, enforceable authority will ensure that local decisions guide the use of funds intended for local priorities while reinforcing accountability and alignment with national performance goals.



Enhance Coordination and Transparency: Establish clear expectations for coordination between states, MPOs, and RTPOs so project programming is predictable, timely, and transparent. Allow for public notification and documentation of program allocations and project selection through strengthened coordination between states and MPOs. This will ensure the public and stakeholders can easily track where federal dollars are going, how projects are prioritized, and their alignment with local priorities and national goals.



Pilot Streamlined Regional Funding: Create a pilot program for select MPOs in Transportation Management Areas (TMAs) to receive suballocated capital funds directly through a simplified process that allows projects to move forward quickly.



Establish Dedicated Formula Funding for Rural Transportation Planning: RTPOs play a vital role in rural planning but lack consistent federal funding. A dedicated formula program for RTPOs, modeled on MPO PL funding, yet separate in source, would strengthen rural project delivery, regional coordination, and safety outcomes.

With clear authority, sufficient funding, and the right implementation tools, MPOs and their partners are well-positioned to advance projects that reduce roadway fatalities, ease congestion, support economic development, and reflect community-driven priorities.

Right-size, Align, and Streamline

Federal transportation programs are most effective when funding can be deployed **quickly, predictably, and with the flexibility to meet real-world needs**. Yet local and regional governments commonly face administrative hurdles and systemic constraints, often beyond their control that slow project delivery and limit the full impact of federal dollars. Four challenges show where federal programs could better align with local realities and move dollars more efficiently:



LOCAL MATCH REQUIREMENTS

Local match requirements (i.e., often set at a 20% local and 80% federal split) create financial and administrative hurdles that disproportionately affect small, rural, and resource-limited communities. These areas often lack the tax base or staffing capacity to meet match obligations, especially as inflation drives up costs or as communities juggle competing priorities. Even when projects are urgently needed, assembling the local share takes time, which slows project delivery and reduces the overall efficiency of federal investment. In some cases, communities must choose between critical needs like water infrastructure, housing, or transportation. When they cannot move forward, the federal dollars tied to those projects may go unused or redirected elsewhere, leaving rural and underserved regions behind, limiting long-term growth, exacerbating economic disparities, and reducing the overall efficiency of investment.



“USE-IT-OR-LOSE-IT” PRACTICES

Federal law sets timelines for spending different funding programs, but in some states, MPOs and their local partners face additional, state-imposed deadlines that shorten the clock. These rigid cutoffs create administrative burdens and discourage long-term, strategic investment. To avoid lapses or reallocation, MPOs are often forced to reshuffle projects on paper, not because funds are unused but because the timelines do not reflect the pace or scale of project delivery. Larger, transformative projects and plans typically require multiple years of funding. At the same time, transportation needs consistently exceed available federal resources, and because these are reimbursement-based programs, there is no risk of idle funds, only a missed opportunity for better investment. Greater flexibility in rolling over both planning and capital funds would reduce red tape, better match funding to project readiness, and ensure every dollar is put to its highest and best use.



ADMINISTRATIVE AND PERMITTING DELAYS

Even well-prepared projects can face months or years of delay due to lengthy federal reviews, complex approval layers, and permitting processes, driving up costs and extending timelines. Expanding the use of Categorical Exclusions (CEs), particularly for smaller projects within the existing right-of-way, would help accelerate delivery without compromising environmental protection. Coupled with other streamlining measures to eliminate redundancies and reduce unnecessary bureaucracy, this would enable federal investments to move more efficiently from planning to construction.



FUNDING UNCERTAINTY AND ACCESS

The IIJA’s expansion of discretionary grant programs has created important opportunities for local and regional governments to pursue innovative, high-impact transportation projects. However, small, rural, and resource-limited communities often encounter challenges in accessing these funds due to limited staff capacity, constrained local budgets, and the high cost of preparing competitive applications. Additionally, delays between award and execution can affect project timelines and increase costs. Many of these communities are ready to deliver meaningful projects but need more streamlined and accessible pathways to federal resources. A more balanced federal funding approach—one that expands formula-based programs with local access while refining discretionary grant processes—can help ensure all communities have a predictable and meaningful opportunity to participate. Targeted improvements to streamline the discretionary grant process—from application through grant management—can reduce administrative burdens, accelerate project delivery, and help federal investments reach communities more efficiently.

OUR PROPOSAL:



Right-size Local Match: Lower the local match requirement for suballocated capital programs and allow in-kind services or other flexible approaches, benefiting small, rural, and resource-limited communities.



Align Timelines with Reality: Allow both planning and capital funds to carry over into future years by aligning obligation timelines with contract authority. Providing carryover authority would enable more strategic, efficient deployment of federal resources aligned with realistic project timelines.



Streamline Reviews and Permitting: Expand Categorical Exclusions and reduce redundant approvals to move well-prepared projects from planning to construction more efficiently.



Strengthen Predictable and Accessible Funding: Expand formula-based programs with guaranteed regional access to provide communities with a more stable and reliable funding pathway. At the same time, retain and refine certain discretionary grant programs to streamline application, award, and implementation processes. A more balanced mix of funding tools will ensure all communities can effectively access federal transportation programs while reducing administrative burdens and improving delivery timelines.

By aligning federal processes with how transportation projects are planned and delivered on the ground, Congress can strengthen the impact of every dollar, ensure broader participation across communities of all sizes, and increase accountability in how federal resources are used.

Drive Safety Improvements

Through Regional Action

America is facing a roadway safety crisis. Each year, more than 40,000 people are killed in traffic crashes, and hundreds of thousands more are seriously injured. These losses affect families and communities in every part of the country. Addressing this crisis requires solutions that are targeted, data-driven, and locally informed. MPOs are uniquely positioned to deliver those solutions.

MPOs typically have access to community input and data on crashes and regional travel patterns that offer a clear picture of where safety risks are greatest. They can identify dangerous intersections, high-injury corridors, and systemic safety challenges that may be less visible in statewide analyses. For example, the identification of high-injury corridors typically finds that a small share of roadway segments within a region see a majority of fatal and serious-injury crashes. High-injury networks often overlap significantly with the map of roadways owned by state DOTs. MPOs are uniquely positioned to work with local and state stakeholders to guide the investment of federal safety dollars to the areas of greatest need. This saves more lives and helps ensure that people can get to work, school, and home safely.

Bridge safety and local asset management are other key infrastructure concerns. Locally owned bridges make up half of all U.S. bridges yet are twice as likely to be in poor condition as state-owned bridges. Local governments are responsible for these critical connections but often lack direct access to funding to repair or replace them before conditions worsen. Suballocating bridge formula funds to regions and strengthening the local role in asset management would allow communities to make urgent repairs based on real-world local and regional needs. The result: more efficient spending, safer infrastructure, and federal dollars reaching the roads and bridges Americans rely on every day.

OUR PROPOSAL:



Empower MPOs to Advance Safety Outcomes: Expand MPO eligibility and decision-making authority for federal safety programs to ensure investments are guided by local data and regional safety action plans.



Incorporate SS4A into HSIP with Guaranteed Local Access: The Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A) program should be incorporated into the Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) formula, with guaranteed local and regional access. SS4A has demonstrated success in addressing the nation's roadway safety crisis and could be delivered more efficiently through formula funding. Its focus on proactive safety planning and community-driven solutions fills critical gaps in HSIP. Preserving SS4A's flexibility and local empowerment within a more predictable structure would support more timely, predictable, and targeted safety investments, guided by regional data and priorities.

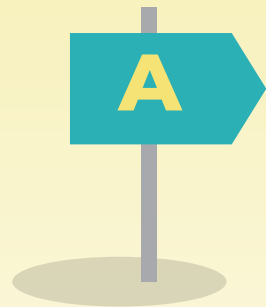


Strengthen Regional and Local Role in Bridge Programs: Continue the Bridge Formula Program and convert it to a suballocated program, giving local and regional governments authority to prioritize and program bridge funds based on regional safety and asset management needs. This would ensure that federal bridge dollars reach the structures most in need, based on real-world local and regional data, while also addressing the needs of off-system bridges that may be overlooked in statewide analyses and priorities.

Strengthening the regional and local role in safety and asset management ensures that federal investments save lives, protect critical infrastructure, and improve the roads and bridges Americans use every day.

Member Action Playbook: How We Get There

2025 is our year to turn planning into policy wins. Here's how every MPO can lead:



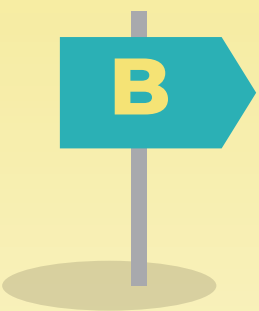
Use the MPO Engagement Toolkit

AMPO's MPO Engagement Toolkit is your all-in-one resource for turning policy goals into real impact. Inside, you'll find:

- **Congressional Compass:** Instantly find your Senators and Representatives, plus their committees assignments and contact information.
- **MPO 101 & Reauthorization 101:** Simple, compelling explainers for any audience.
- **Legislative Priorities One-Pager:** Clear facts to leave behind with decision-makers.
- **Key Messages & Elevator Pitches:** Ready-to-use talking points to make every meeting count.
- **Engagement in Action Guides:** Practical checklists to plan meetings, follow up, and build lasting relationships.

Use it to:

- Identify your Congressional delegation.
- Customize your local story.
- Develop concise leave-behinds.
- Elevate how your MPO delivers real value to your region and nation.



Policy Resources



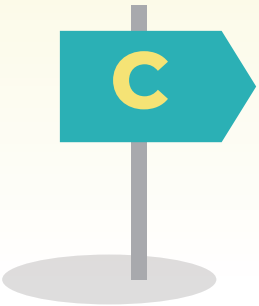
Litigation Tracker

Put Engagement Into Action

Effective engagement is more than sharing papers, it's about telling your region's story.

Here's how to do it:

- **Build relationships with your Congressional Delegation and District Offices:** Offer briefings to district office staff on MPO roles and regional project highlights. Keep your local elected officials and district staff informed of successes and needs.
- **Schedule visits and tours:** Invite members of Congress and their staff (district offices included) to ribbon cuttings, regional transportation events, or listening sessions.
- **Prepare your message:** Use AMPO's Key Messaging Framework to link national priorities to regional benefits.
- **Show real impacts:** Share local examples that illustrate why more planning funds, lower match, streamlined funding, and carryover authority matter to your community.
- **Follow up and be visible:** After meetings, send thank-yous and updates — keep your champions in the loop. AMPO's newsletters designed to keep you informed on the latest developments in federal transportation policy and the federal courts.
- **Remember:** AMPO is your voice in Washington. Your local stories strengthen our national push.



Leverage AMPO's National Network





While you lead regionally, AMPO is:

- Meeting with key offices and authorizing committees on Capitol Hill.
- Coordinating testimony and briefings with partner associations.
- Working side-by-side with partners like the NLC, NACo, USCM, NADO, and NARC to deliver a united message on the Hill.
- Updating tools like the MPO Engagement Toolkit and National Beat Policy Newsletter and Friday Docket so you're always informed.

Stay Connected & Take Action

Reauthorization is every MPO's moment to show what regional planning delivers for America.

We encourage you to:

-  Use the tools.
-  Tell your story.
-  Keep your board engaged and your elected leaders informed.
-  Coordinate with AMPO to elevate your voice.

Together, we amplify our collective voice, champion impactful solutions, and arrive at the next stop: reauthorization that works for MPOs and the communities we serve.

Thank you for keeping America's communities moving forward — together.

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