

The National Beat

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Feature Focus

USDOT Reauthorization RFI, AMPO Letter to EPW, Senate THUD Bill, EO 14321

[USDOT RFI: Reauthorization Recommendations](#)

USDOT launched a **formal Request for Information (RFI) for reauthorization suggestions**. USDOT invites stakeholders, **including MPOs**, to submit specific recommendations for policy improvements, including suggested statutory changes. Stakeholders must submit comments by **August 20th**.

AMPO encourages our members to respond to the RFI not only to support AMPO's national position but also to demonstrate why MPOs matter in project delivery, public accountability, and federal goal alignment. **To assist MPOs in submitting comments, AMPO has created a customizable RFI response template** that aligns with our national platform and the priorities of the Local Officials for Transportation (LOT) Coalition. The template is designed to assist your submission while ensuring your organization's unique regional voice is reflected.

 [Download the RFI template here](#)

Please reach out to Katie Economou, at keconomou@ampo.org with any questions or for assistance with submitting responses.

[AMPO Letter to EPW Committee](#)

AMPO submitted a letter for the record to the Senate Environment and Public Works (EPW) Committee. The letter, submitted in response to the committee's July 23rd hearing on reauthorization, addresses local challenges and opportunities related to federal funding, building upon Mayor Gallego's testimony.

 [Read AMPO's summary of the hearing here](#)

[FY 26 THUD Senate Bill](#)

On July 24th, the Senate Appropriations Committee approved its FY26 Transportation, Housing, and Urban Development (THUD) Appropriations Bill (S. 2465) on a 27–1 vote. The bill provides **\$100.2 billion in total net discretionary budget authority, including \$26.5 billion for USDOT, and limits IJA funding transfers to \$745 million** (i.e., a significant point of contrast with the House's \$4.4 billion in repurposed IJA funds).

 [Read AMPO's analysis of the House FY 26 THUD bill here](#)

The Senate's approach avoids some of the steep discretionary cuts proposed in the House bill, including transit capital grants, rail, and regional infrastructure investment. Key provisions include:

BUILD Grants

- The Senate restores **\$250 million** in discretionary appropriations for the BUILD grant program (formerly RAISE/TIGER), while the House provides none.
- The Senate maintains statutory requirements for geographic equity and a 50/50 urban-rural split and explicitly restricts selection criteria to those outlined in [49 U.S.C. §6702\(d\)\(3\) and \(4\)](#).
- Planning grants are **exempt from minimum grant size**.

Highway and Bridge Programs

- **FHWA:** Total obligation limitation remains at **\$62.7 billion**, with an **additional \$581 million in general fund supplements**.
 - **\$350 million** is set aside for the Rural Bridge Repair and Rehabilitation Program.
 - **\$25 million** for high-priority Tribal projects.
 - **\$10 million** for the Scenic Byways Program.
- Senate transfers **\$555 million from NEVI** to fund Highway Infrastructure Programs.

FTA Capital Investment Grants (CIG)

- Funded at **\$1.95 billion**, a major increase over the House's \$57 million.

Amtrak and Rail Programs

- The bill provides **\$2.4 billion for Amtrak**, split between:
 - \$1.577 billion for the National Network (often benefiting smaller MPO regions),
 - \$850 million for the Northeast Corridor.
- The **Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements (CRISI)** program receives \$106.7 million, plus an additional \$44.8 million via IJA transfer.

Port and Maritime Infrastructure

- **Port Infrastructure Development Program (PIDP):** **\$75 million** in regular appropriations (compared to \$0 in the House bill).
- **Assistance to Small Shipyards:** \$30 million.

Essential Air Service (EAS)

- Funded at **\$513.6 million**, similar to the House. The Senate includes language **prohibiting premature renegotiation of contracts**.

Policy Direction and Oversight

- Section 194 of the bill **requires USDOT to report on all FY25 grants or cooperative agreements that were later modified, terminated, or reduced**.
- Section 192 **protects the continued operation of USDOT regional, division, and field offices**.
- Office of the Secretary (OST) budget preserves the Small Business/DBE Office and Office of Civil Rights, and funds technical assistance for Tribal and rural partners, **with \$10 million for the Rural and Tribal Infrastructure Advancement Program**.

Comparison Between the House and Senate Version

Category	Senate Bill	House Bill	Notes
Discretionary USDOT Funding	\$26.5B	\$22.3B	Senate adds \$4.4B more without steep IIJA repurposing
IIJA Advance Transfers	\$745M	\$4.4B	Senate limits transfers, preserving program intent
CIG Program	\$1.95B	\$57M	Senate sustains project pipeline; House cuts 98%
BUILD (RAISE) Grants	\$250M	\$0	Senate maintains program with clear criteria and rural-urban balance
Amtrak	\$2.4B (discretionary)	\$0 (reliant on IIJA offsets)	Senate preserves base funding for both networks
CRISI	\$151M (combined)	\$538M (but from rail offset)	Senate provides new funding; House shifts FRA money
NEVI Transfers	\$555M	\$1B	Both repurpose NEVI, but Senate offsets are narrower in scope
Research & Planning	\$34.3M	\$23M	Senate invests more in planning, permitting, and R&D

The Senate bill offers a more balanced framework, preserving the structure of IIJA, maintaining funding for major formula programs and pots, and avoiding aggressive reallocations of infrastructure dollars.

Executive Order: Ending Crime and Disorder on America's Streets

President Trump's recent Executive Order (EO) 14321, "Ending Crime and Disorder on America's Streets," introduces new priorities in federal homelessness policy. The order includes a provision in **Section 3 that directs the Secretary of Transportation and other agency heads to review discretionary grant programs.** The review will consider prioritizing jurisdictions that enforce bans on urban camping, loitering, open drug use, and squatting.

This EO could potentially change how a jurisdiction's local enforcement policies affect its eligibility, prioritization, and other conditions for receiving discretionary grants. We have observed similar executive orders in the past that have directed agencies, including USDOT, to review their grants for alignment with administration priorities. AMPO is closely monitoring this EO to better understand its potential impacts on transportation funding.



Federal Roundup

*Congress: Congressional Vibe Check, Legislative Activity, and Congressional Hearings
Administration & Agencies: EPA Proposed Reversal of GHG Finding, USDOT Updates*



Congress

AMPO's Congressional "Vibe" Check

Government Shutdown Deadline September 30th, 2025: With lawmakers now in recess, Congress will return in September with just four weeks to prevent a government shutdown. While the Senate passed its first bipartisan spending package before adjournment (read our analysis above), House Republicans have moved forward with partisan bills featuring deep cuts and heavy policy riders. Senate and House appropriators are expected to meet over August, but the two chambers remain far apart on topline funding.

- White House OMB director Russ Vought is strategizing with Republican leadership to rescind previously approved funding.
- Some republicans are calling for spending to be frozen or cut and are pushing for wins such as rescissions and earmarks.
- Democratic leaders are calling for bipartisan negotiations, warning that unilateral action risks a shutdown.
- Democrats are aiming to protect programs like healthcare subsidies and resist further clawbacks.

Many policy experts believe the **likeliest outcome appears to be a short-term funding patch (i.e., continuing resolution) paired with select full-year appropriations**, though even that could prove difficult amid internal party divisions and administration pressure to avoid compromise.

Legislative Activity

 **Senate Confirms Molinaro as FTA Administrator:** The Senate confirmed former Representative Marc Molinaro (R-NY) as Administrator of FTA in a 71–23 vote. A one-term Congressman and former Dutchess County executive, Molinaro has served in recent months as a senior adviser to Transportation Secretary Sean Duffy, where he focused on subway safety and transit readiness for the 2026 FIFA World Cup. Molinaro has pledged to uphold safety enforcement through nonpartisan FTA staff, but he inherits an agency facing major staffing losses (i.e., over 30% of FTA's workforce is departing under the administration's Deferred Resignation Program).

 **Commerce Approves 4 USDOT Nominees:** The Senate Commerce Committee approved four administration nominees for USDOT's leadership roles on July 30, as the administration pushes to fill critical vacancies before the August recess. The nominees included Paul Roberti (PHMSA), Jonathan Morrison (NHTSA), Derek Barrs (FMCSA), and Michael Rutherford (Assistant Secretary for Multimodal Freight). They faced varying levels of support, with only Roberti receiving bipartisan backing, the rest advanced on party-line votes.

Congressional Hearings, Markups, and Meetings

View the full [Senate Schedule](#). View the full [House Schedule](#).

Note: The House and Senate have adjourned for August Recess and will return in September.



Administration & Agencies

 **EPA Action to Reverse Greenhouse Gas Endangerment Finding:** EPA has formally proposed rescinding its **2009 Endangerment Finding**, the legal foundation for regulating GHG emissions from new vehicles. Citing weakened confidence in past climate science and economic concerns, EPA's proposed rule would **dismantle all GHG standards for light-, medium-, and heavy-duty vehicles**. The rollback comes at the direction of a Trump administration executive order and is expected to face intense legal scrutiny, particularly considering Supreme Court precedent affirming EPA's authority to regulate GHGs under the Clean Air Act. Removing the Endangerment Finding could unravel federal clean car regulations, eliminate incentives for EVs, and limit future administrations' ability to reduce emissions. Legal challenges are expected, especially as the rule faces conflicts with **Massachusetts v. EPA** and public reliance on longstanding vehicle standards. Virtual hearings are scheduled for August 19-20th, with **public comment open until September 15th**.



 **FTA Allows Low-No Grant Recipients to Shift from Zero- to Low-Emission Projects:** FTA announced that **recipients of Low or No Emission (Low-No) grants can now request to modify their projects to include low-emission technologies**, such as compressed natural gas, instead of exclusively zero-emission systems like battery-electric or hydrogen.

 **USDOT Cancels \$26 Million for DC-Baltimore SCMAGLEV Project:** USDOT cancelled over \$26 million in federal grants for the DC-Baltimore Superconducting Magnetic Levitation (SCMAGLEV) project. USDOT stated concerns over the project's planning, public support, and national security concerns. With the environmental review paused since 2021, Duffy ended DOT's involvement, stating the project "did not have the means to go the distance," though he left the door open to future MAGLEV proposals.

 **USDOT on Safety Standards Near Rail and Highways:** USDOT announced it is reinstating and strengthening safety recommendations for wind turbines built near railroads and highways, reversing decisions made under the past administration. USDOT is now recommending a minimum 1.2-mile setback from key transportation corridors and launching a formal study on radio interference risks. USDOT is also calling on Congress to investigate the prior administration's handling of turbines placement and safety reviews.

 **FTA Issues Guidance for 2026 FIFA World Cup Transit Preparations:** With the 2026 FIFA World Cup approaching, the FTA has released a new video series to help host cities, transit agencies, and private bus operators prepare for the influx of fans. The guidance covers transit safety, accessibility, charter bus rules, and vehicle availability. FTA encourages ongoing communication with regional offices as preparations continue.

 **Audit Finds FHWA Buy America Oversight Lacking:** An audit by the U.S. DOT Inspector General found that FHWA has not provided sufficient guidance or oversight to ensure state and

local compliance with Buy America requirements. These rules mandate the use of US-made iron, steel, and manufactured products in federally funded highway projects. The report outlines six recommendations, including issuing best practices for materials certification, updating guidance on the minimal use threshold, enhancing oversight, and resolving questioned costs. FHWA has agreed to take corrective action.



National News

 [Urban Institute Survey Report: Planning for Housing in a Regional Context](#): A new Urban Institute report finds that regional coordination between housing and transportation planning remains rare, despite growing awareness of their interdependence. Based on a **national survey of 143 MPOs and councils of government**, the study shows that **fewer than 1 in 5 regional agencies meaningfully integrate housing into transportation planning**. Most operate with little authority over local land use and receive minimal funding (i.e., just 5% of budgets, on average) for housing-related work. While staff overwhelmingly support more integrated regional planning, they report needing significantly more resources and federal policy support to bridge the gap between where people live and how they get to work.

 [Eno Freight Rail Report](#): Eno released a new report, *Freight Rail for the 21st Century*, highlighting opportunities to shift more freight from highways to rail in order to improve efficiency and system resilience.

 [Eno Strategies for Rural Transit Provision Report](#): Eno released a report, *Connecting Communities: Options and Considerations for Enhancing Rural Transit*, highlights the challenges and opportunities of providing transit in low-density areas.

 [AASHTO Survey Reviews Impact of AI on Operations](#): A new AASHTO survey reveals growing interest among state DOTs in deploying artificial intelligence to improve transportation operations, particularly in traffic signal optimization, safety analysis, and infrastructure maintenance.



Notice of Funding Opportunities

Open USDOT NOFOs:

-  [Port Infrastructure Development Program \(PIDP\)](#): amended version of the PIDP NOFO for projects that improve the safety, efficiency, or reliability of the movement of goods into, out of, around, or within a port. **Applications are due by September 10th, 2025.**

Upcoming NOFOs:

-  [Strengthening Mobility and Revolutionizing Transportation \(SMART\) Grants – R2](#):
 - Expected Release:** end of August.

- **FAA:** three NOFOs anticipated this summer (Airport Terminal Program, Federal Contract Tower Program, Airport Assistance Grants Reallocation)
- **FRA:** FY 2025 discretionary grant schedule “coming soon”

[→](#) Access **AMPO’s NOFO Tracker** [here](#).



Recent Editions & AMPO Analysis

July 25th (2025)

- **Federal Focus (7/25):** USDOT Reauthorization Kick-off & RFI, FY26 THUD Appropriations Bill, EPW Hearings on Reauthorization, T&I Hearing on USDOT’s Budget

July 10th (2025)

- **Federal Focus (7/10):** One Big Beautiful Bill Act (Analysis), USDOT Letter to all Funding Recipients, FHWA Highway Program Apportionments

July 3rd (2025)

- **Federal Focus (7/3):** NEPA Reform (Analysis), Division Office Cuts, EPA Grant Alarm Bells, USDOT Safe Roads Campaign, FTA Deregulatory Measures, Reconciliation Updates, Reauthorization Updates

June 18th (2025)

June 11th (2025)

- **AMPO Analysis (6/11):** Potential Freeze on \$30B in Agency Funds, Bridge Investment Program FY 2025 NOFO (analysis), USDOT Approval of 529 grants, Administration Resets CAFE Program, Updates to BEAD Program

June 6th (2025)

- **AMPO Analysis (6/6):** FY 26 USDOT Budget Request, DOE Grant Cancellations, FTA Master Agreements Update, GAO Ruling on EV Funds, Supreme Court Narrows NEPA Scope, FHWA Terminates Transportation Planning Rulemaking

May 28th (2025)

- **AMPO Analysis (5/28):** Withdrawal of CEQ Interim Guidance on GHG and Climate Change under NEPA, GAO finds Administration Broke Law by Freezing EV Funds

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