



# The National Beat

February 20, 2026

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## Feature Focus

*BASICS Act & EPA Endangerment Finding*

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### **BASICS Act**

#### ***Congress is in recess, but we still need your support!***

On Feb. 9, [Rep. Kristen McDonald Rivet \(D-MI\)](#) and Rep. Rob Bresnahan (R-PA) introduced [HR 7437](#), the [Bridges and Safety Infrastructure for Community Success \(BASICS\) Act](#). **The legislation would invest in bridges, deliver regional priority projects, improve road safety, enhance transparency and collaboration, and build stronger rural and urban regions.** Cumulatively, this would improve local and regional access to funding to plan, deliver, and maintain the systems that communities rely on every day.

 [Access AMPO's Analysis of the BASICS Act here](#)

#### **Support the Bill**

The legislation has been introduced in the House and referred to the House T&I committee. The Local Officials in Transportation (LOT) Coalition, including AMPO, are working to identify sponsors in the Senate to lead a companion bill. As reauthorization discussions move forward, building visible support now increases the likelihood that key provisions are reflected in the next surface transportation reauthorization bill. There are several ways for MPOs and their board members to support this bill.

- **For all things BASICS Act**, refer to the [BASICS Act Toolkit](#), which includes bill text, summaries, one pagers, action items, and supporting materials.
  - **On Thursday, Feb. 19, the LOT Coalition hosted a webinar** to share more about the BASICS Act. If you were unable to attend, the slides are available on the landing page under “Resources”.
  - **AMPO will host a dedicated BASICS briefing in the coming weeks** to walk through funding assumptions, messaging considerations, and implications for MPOs in greater detail.
- **Brief your MPO Policy Board** on how these priorities affect transportation outcomes in your region. The [MPO Policy Board Member Letter of Support Template](#) is available to assist board members who wish to express support.
- **Educate your congressional delegation** and speak on how the provision would benefit your region, use the [MPO Education Outreach Template](#) to connect with your delegation. Using data-backed, localized examples make a difference.
- **Invite your members of congress to the district** and consider hosting a regional roundtable or site visit. Demonstrating local needs firsthand helps connect federal policy to on-the-ground priorities.



- **Stay up-to-date on reauthorization** and how the bill progresses, read AMPO's weekly National Beat.
- **Visiting Washington, DC?** Reach out to [Katie Economou](#) for materials and meeting preparation support.

**Questions about the BASICS Act?** Reach out to [Katie Economou](#) for support.

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## [EPA Endangerment Finding Ruling](#)

On Feb. 12, the [EPA rescinded the 2009 Greenhouse Gas Endangerment Finding](#) which originally concluded that greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions are harmful to the public health under the Clean Air Act. The ruling created the legal foundation for federal climate regulations, beginning with motor vehicle emissions and later extending to other sources of GHG pollution under the Clean Air Act. The EPA justified the decision by arguing that **the endangerment finding exceeded the agency's statutory authority under the Clean Air Act and that rescission would realign its regulatory framework with congressional intent.**

***TL;DR:** The EPA rescinded the GHG endangerment finding, claiming the EPA lacked statutory authority to regulate these emissions. The rule was the foundation of federal climate standards for motor vehicles, and greenhouse gas emissions in general. While the final rule was issued, the decision received significant criticism and legal challenges.*

### Context

**For more than 15 years, the endangerment finding has provided the legal justification for federal greenhouse gas regulations, including vehicle emissions standards and other climate-related rules.** Under the previous administration, it continued to support tailpipe emissions standards aimed at reducing fleet-wide vehicle emissions by roughly 50 percent by 2032. It also served as a foundation for broader emissions-related policies affecting energy production and sustainability requirements.

EPA's rationale for repeal centers on **statutory interpretation and affordability.** The agency stated that the ruling did not align with the statutory authority of the Clean Air Act, and that rescinding the rule would help drive down prices for American consumers, especially within the automobile industry. The EPA's analysis suggests that easing emission standards for automobile manufacturers could even save Americans over **\$1.3 trillion and \$2,400** from the cost of a new car. The rescission of the endangerment finding will now also release automobile manufacturers from regulations aimed at reducing fleet-wide emissions by 50 percent by 2032.

### Litigation and Congressional Reactions

Reactions to the EPA's decision have varied. The automobile industry and some republican Members of Congress have pointed to the endangerment finding as an often "unachievable"



standard for automobile regulations. Their support for easing emissions standards centers on enabling greater consumer choice at lower prices.

Across the aisle, [41 Senate Democrats](#), led by Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse, have called for an investigation into the EPA's decision. Beyond the Hill, a [coalition of health and environmental groups](#) have already filed a lawsuit over the EPA's decision, notably led by the American Public Health Association, the Union of Concerned Scientists, Earthjustice, Public Citizen, and the Sierra Club. Although the rule has been finalized, its long-term durability will depend on the outcome of ongoing legal challenges, with some speculation that the process could span across multiple years and ultimately decided by the Supreme Court.

### Impact

EPA framed the repeal as a move to promote affordability and regulatory certainty. However, the change could have ripple effects across transportation, energy, and infrastructure policy. Specifically, the endangerment findings were at the **core of many federal emission focused grant programs** or the basis behind emission reduction efforts across the country. The impact of the decision could potentially be felt across sectors; the following are some additional potential implications:

- **Prioritization for federal programs:** May shift priorities in discretionary grants and formula programs that previously emphasized GHG reductions.
  - There are concerns about how the repeal could indirectly affect vehicle fuel-economy standards; while [EPA said the decision would not change existing standards](#), fuel-economy requirements are set separately by NHTSA.
- **State-Federal Conflict:** States, such as [California](#), with stricter emissions policies may face legal uncertainty and potential conflicts with federal standards.
- **Planning and Analysis:** Differences between federal and state treatment of GHG emissions could create inconsistencies in transportation planning and emissions analysis.



## Congress

### Congressional “Vibe” Check

**Reauthorization.** Reauthorization activity continues to accelerate as committees refine draft language and begin shaping the next surface transportation bill.

#### Where things stand:

- **House T&I.** Majority and minority staff are actively exchanging draft sections. Titles covering **NHTSA, FMCSA, FTA, and FHWA have already circulated internally.** Staff-to-staff negotiations on base text are now underway, and other House committees and off-committee members are beginning to surface their own reauthorization priorities.
  - House timing remains aggressive. Bill text is *expected* to be released in early 2026, with markups anticipated in Q1 and potential floor consideration in early spring. Chairman Graves has stated his **goal of passing a bill out of the House this spring.** With the IIJA set to expire on Sept. 30, 2026, and with Chairman Graves in his final term amid an approaching midterm election cycle, House leadership has strong incentives to complete work this Congress.
- **Senate.** Among Senate committees, Environment and Public Works (EPW) is furthest along. Chair Capito (R-WV) has indicated plans to release draft text and hold a markup in early March 2026, but she recently indicated that an **introduction of the bill may not happen until April or May.** Text exchanges and early negotiations between majority and minority EPW committee staff are beginning to take shape, suggesting the committee is further along in developing base reauthorization language. By comparison, the Commerce and Banking Committees are continuing early-stage drafting, and their timelines remain less defined.
- **Administration.** On the Administration side, FHWA, FTA, and other USDOT operating administrations are transmitting their reauthorization proposals to the Office of Management and Budget, the final step before formal submission to Congress.

**A general note on timing:** Given the remaining FY 2026 appropriations work, expected policy debates, and the long history of surface transportation bills missing deadlines, a CR remains possible. Even so, MPOs should operate under the assumption that reauthorization could move on time. This engagement window will not open twice, and once base text is released, shaping major provisions becomes significantly harder via amendment.

#### The Buzz on Reauthorization

-  [USDOT Proposes Reauthorization Language Tied to Transit Funding and Immigration Policy:](#) USDOT has circulated draft reauthorization language that would

**prohibit states and local transit agencies from using federal transit funds to provide free transportation to unauthorized immigrants. The proposal would apply across all FTA programs,** Under the draft, the Secretary of Transportation could withhold funding if a transit agency is found to be providing services in a manner that interferes with federal immigration law. The proposal appears aimed at jurisdictions that have offered free transit rides to migrants traveling to shelters or service providers. The measure is part of a **broader policy debate over the federal role in influencing local transportation decisions.** Some USDOT officials have reportedly questioned the necessity of the language, noting there are no documented cases of transit systems actively assisting individuals in evading federal enforcement.

- [🔗 US Chamber of Commerce Highlights Infrastructure and Permitting Reform Needs:](#) At the Port of Stockton, Rep. Josh Harder (CA-09), local business leaders, and the US Chamber of Commerce convened to emphasize the Central Valley's infrastructure and transportation priorities, stressing the need for long-term federal funding and streamlined permitting processes.. The Chamber and Rep. Harder expressed that **predictable funding and a more efficient regulatory process are essential to improve infrastructure, strengthen freight movement, and deliver a robust federal surface transportation reauthorization.**
- [🔗 CBO Provides Update on Highway Trust Fund Solvency:](#) The Congressional Budget Office's latest baseline forecast projects stronger HTF revenues than previously expected, with tax receipts now predicted to grow about 1.1 percent annually over the next decade instead of declining, **increasing total projected 2026–2035 revenues by about \$85 billion** largely due to higher gasoline tax receipts following the repeal of federal EV incentives and emissions rules. **However, despite this improvement, the HTF remains structurally insolvent,** with spending still exceeding user-tax revenues. The Mass Transit Account is expected to run out of money by mid-2027 and the Highway Account in 2028, requiring roughly \$125 billion to maintain solvency over a typical five-year authorization, while the overall long-term funding gap, though smaller than previously projected, still totals about \$300 billion. HTF solvency remains one of the central questions heading into surface transportation reauthorization and is a **stated priority of Chairman Graves,** who has repeatedly emphasized the need to address the program's structural imbalance as part of the next authorization bill. Read AMPO's HTF primer [here](#).

## Introduced Legislation Related to Reauthorization:

- [119<sup>th</sup> Weekly Congress Legislation Tracker](#)

**What's Making Headlines?** A number of transportation issues on the Hill are drawing attention this week outside of reauthorization.

- [🔗 Baby on Board Act Advances From Committee:](#) The bipartisan [Baby Changing on Board Act](#), led by Senators Peter Welch (D-VT) and Marsha Blackburn (R-TN), advanced out of the Senate Commerce Committee and would **require Amtrak trains to install baby-changing stations in all accessible restrooms.** A House companion bill from Rep. Lauren Underwood (D-IL) and Jeff Van Drew (R-NJ) has already passed and now awaits a Senate

vote. Supporters say the measure would make long train trips more practical and sanitary for traveling families. (See Legislative Text [Here](#)).

- [🔗 The Gas Reduction Act is Introduced:](#) Rep. Kevin Kiley (R-CA) is drafting the proposed Gas Tax Reduction Act, which would penalize states with fuel taxes above 50 cents per gallon by **cutting 8 percent of their federal highway funds from programs like the NHPP and the STBG**. Supporters say the bill would pressure high-tax states, such as California, Pennsylvania, Illinois, New Jersey, and Michigan, to lower fuel taxes and reduce costs for drivers and trucking companies. Critics warn the policy could weaken funding for road maintenance, safety, and environmental improvements, potentially worsening infrastructure conditions despite lowering fuel costs.
- [🔗 House Introduced Bill Targeting “Chameleon Carriers”:](#) The House introduced [the Safety and Accountability in Freight Enforcement \(SAFE\) Act](#), sponsored by Harriet Hageman, to crack down on so-called “chameleon carriers”, trucking firms that dissolve and reappear under new names to evade federal oversight. **The legislation would require FMCSA to conduct a nationwide study of these carriers, implement an advanced automation tool to flag suspicious registration applications, and enhance coordination between federal and state agencies.** Industry groups, including the American Trucking Associations and the Wyoming Trucking Association, support the bill, saying it strengthens safety, creates an even playing field for compliant carriers, and prevents repeat offenders from returning to the road. *Read more on the CDL issue below.*



## Administration & Agencies

### USDOT

- [🔗 The Gateway Rail Project is Reimbursed:](#) USDOT has disbursed the full remaining **\$235 million** owed to the \$16 billion Gateway rail tunnel project between New York and New Jersey, allowing construction to restart next week. The reimbursement includes **\$205 million in overdue federal funding** and **\$30 million** for January construction costs. New York This follows a [federal judge’s order](#) to USDOT to release funding for the project that was previously paused on Feb. 6.
- [🔗 FTA Administrator to Step Down:](#) **Marc Molinaro, the FTA Administrator, plans to step down** after only six months to run for a seat in the New York State Assembly. While the decision is based on personal factors, Molinaro would forgo his position overlooking billions in transit funding to return to state level politics, where he previously was a Member of Congress and where he may seek to rebuild his electoral base in New York.
- [🔗 FRA Describes the Future of USDOT Streamlining Efforts:](#) Officials from the FRA described a major shift in environmental review for infrastructure projects, driven in part by a Supreme Court decision limiting how agencies analyze indirect environmental impacts and by broader efforts to streamline project delivery. **FRA said the agency is aligning NEPA practices across the USDOT, expanding categorical exclusions, shifting more review responsibility to state DOTs with experience from the FHWA, digitizing review processes, and improving technical support to accelerate permitting**, while also working with the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation to modernize Section 106 historic-review requirements.

- [🔗 FTA Extends EEO Program Deadline Amid Circular Review](#): FTA is reviewing and updating Circular 4704.1A, Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) Requirements and Guidelines for FTA Recipients, as part of a broader USDOT effort to evaluate and potentially revise guidance and regulations to align with recent executive orders. While that review is underway, FTA has extended the deadline for certain EEO program submissions. Transit agencies that were previously required to submit updated EEO programs by March 1, 2026, now have until October 1, 2026.
- [🔗 FHWA Seeks Public Input on Emergency Relief Funding Applications](#): FHWA is requesting public comment on reinstating a previously approved information collection under the Emergency Relief program, which funds repairs to federal-aid highways and federal lands roads damaged by disasters. The notice showed that States, territories, and DC submit an estimated 40 applications annually, each taking roughly 250 hours to complete. **Comments are due by April 20, 2026.**

## USDOT Enforcement Actions on CDL Compliance

USDOT is significantly escalating enforcement of federal commercial driver's license (CDL) requirements, signaling that states that fail to correct identified violations risk losing substantial federal transportation funding. These actions continue to raise legal, operational, and workforce concerns across several states. Read the [Feb. 13 National Beat](#) for additional context.

- [🔗 CDL Compliance Audit Begins in Illinois](#): FMCSA has warned Illinois it could face penalties or possible decertification of its commercial driver's license program after an audit found compliance failures in issuing non-domiciled CDLs. The USDOT ordered the state to halt new and renewed non-domiciled licenses and fix deficiencies, warning it could lose **4% of federal highway funds (about \$64.3 million) in 2027**, rising to **8% (\$128.6 million)** in later years if problems persist. Gov. JB Pritzker and state officials disputed the findings and said they will review the federal determination while working to maintain compliance.
- [🔗 FMCSA Targets CDL Training Centers](#): The FMCSA has issued notices of proposed removal to over **550 CDL training schools**, part of a nationwide crackdown on CDL "mills". Over five days, FMCSA investigators conducted **1,426 on-site inspections** across 50 states, resulting in **448 formal removal notices**, **109 voluntary withdrawals**, and **97 schools still under investigation**. Violations included unqualified instructors, improper vehicles, incomplete hazardous materials training, and failure to meet state requirements. Secretary Duffy and FMCSA Administrator Derek Barrs framed the action as a major safety enforcement effort, while industry representatives have said it addresses longstanding safety risks and undermines the false narrative of a trucker shortage.



## National News

- [🔗 Uber to Incentivize EV Charging Infrastructure Expansion](#): Uber announced it will incentivize partners to build electric-vehicle chargers in the US and Europe, guaranteeing minimum usage in areas where its drivers operate to help charging companies recover costs faster. The initiative aims to support EV adoption, especially among ride-share drivers, despite weaker US EV sales following policy rollbacks, and includes plans to help deploy about **1,000**

**chargers** and invest **\$100 million** in charging hubs for autonomous vehicles. Charging growth remains strong, with US public chargers rising about **30% last year to 70,000 ports**, driven in part by heavy usage from ride-share drivers, while the company says expanding infrastructure will lower operating costs and emissions over time.

- [!\[\]\(97d7445697a94970d6443da16b12b5fa\_img.jpg\) \*\*Dallas-Area Averts Transit Funding Crisis:\*\*](#) After years of tension between the Dallas Area Rapid Transit system (DART) and six cities, the **planned referendums that could have cut more than \$200 million from DART's budget may be canceled**. Concessions from the City of Dallas and DART, including board restructuring and a partial refund of sales tax revenue totaling nearly \$42 million annually, combined with a \$75 million commitment from the North Central Texas Council of Governments, have eased the immediate financial threat. While the move keeps buses, paratransit, and regional transit services running for over 600,000 residents, advocates caution that rebuilding trust, ensuring equitable service, and securing long-term state support for metro transit remain critical.
- [!\[\]\(258b828d223cb6b35d2b001cf8c6c1e7\_img.jpg\) \*\*California Proposes E-Bike Registration Bill:\*\*](#) California lawmakers have introduced [\*\*Assembly Bill 1942\*\*](#), the E-Bike Accountability Act, which would **require owners of Class 2 and Class 3 electric bicycles to register with the DMV, display license plates, and carry proof of ownership, aiming to address rising e-bike injuries**. The bill has drawn criticism from cycling advocates who argue it imposes unnecessary bureaucracy, could discourage sustainable transportation, and unfairly targets lawful e-bike riders rather than high-speed modified bikes that pose the greatest safety risks. As the bill proceeds through committee hearings, California is poised to debate how best to balance public safety, environmental goals, and equitable access to e-bike transportation.
- [!\[\]\(3ae3791b31be30fab239cd4ec63dfafe\_img.jpg\) \*\*Utah Bill Targets Salt Lake City Bike Lanes:\*\*](#) Utah lawmakers have introduced State Bill 242, a controversial transportation measure that **could force Salt Lake City to undo key traffic calming projects and restrict local control over street design**, drawing comparisons to [\*\*Ontario's law\*\*](#) that mandated the removal of Toronto bike lanes. The bill targets three specific corridors with bike lanes, imposes minimum lane widths, and grants the state veto power over "highway reduction" strategies, sparking outrage from Vision Zero advocates who argue that local residents, not the state, should determine street safety measures. While some provisions have been softened, opponents warn that if passed, S.B. 242 could set a troubling precedent for urban traffic safety across Utah and beyond.

## **Notice of Funding Opportunities**

- [!\[\]\(52f8f8b98f8396d4f92059ff19d41332\_img.jpg\) \*\*Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development \(BUILD\) Grant Program:\*\*](#) The goal of the program is to fund projects that will have a significant local or regional impact and improve transportation infrastructure.
  - **Deadline:** Feb. 24, 2026
- [!\[\]\(e5f96594470bce765690acf8b7456284\_img.jpg\) \*\*Port Infrastructure Development Program \(PIDP\):\*\*](#) Supports port and industry stakeholders to improve port and freight related infrastructure. PIDP funding specifically supports projects that improve the safety, efficiency, or reliability of the movement of goods into, out of, around, or within a port.



- **Deadline:** Feb. 28, 2026

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

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