



The National Beat

April 17, 2026

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Feature Focus

AASHTO's Industry Letter, Congressional Update, and BASICS Act

[AASHTO's Industry Letter on the BASICS Act](#)

On April 6, the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO), in conjunction with eleven major trade organizations, **released a [letter calling for the next surface transportation reauthorization to formalize an 85/15 split, with 85 percent of federal highway formula dollars allocated to state DOTs and 15 percent to local governments](#)**. The letter argues that this distribution best reflects the responsibilities and capacity of state DOTs, given their role in managing the federal-aid highway system and their ability to plan, finance, and deliver projects compared to local governments. The letter also emphasized that states already play a significant role in supporting local transportation needs through state-specific funding programs.

While the letter emphasizes state delivery capacity, it does not fully reflect the broader project delivery environment affecting all levels of government. [AMPO's 2023 report on project timelines and unobligated balances](#) highlights that **delays are driven by system-wide challenges**, not simply by funding share/distribution. These include:

- Additional state-level requirements tied to obligation
- Inflation and supply chain disruptions
- Workforce and staffing constraints
- Challenges meeting local match requirements
- Limited transparency in project selection and evaluation processes

Taken together, these factors point to structural and administrative barriers that impact project delivery across the board.

What's at Stake for Regions and Local Governments

Strong partnerships between MPOs, local governments, and state DOTs are critical to ensuring safe and reliable transportation infrastructure. However, **reverting to a 15 percent local share would represent a significant step backward**.

Under the IIJA, about **25 percent of federal transportation funding was made available to local governments and regions** through a combination of formula and competitive programs. Reducing that share could:

- Limit access to funding at the level of government responsible for maintaining and operating the majority of the system.
- Constrain the ability of regions to move projects forward
- Worsen local safety and roadway condition outcomes
- Undermine progress made under the IIJA

This issue highlights a broader misalignment between responsibility and resources:



- **75%** of US road miles are locally owned
- **43%** of the Federal-Aid Highway system is locally owned
- **34%** of vehicle miles traveled are on locally owned roads
- **yet local governments receive only about 16% of federal transportation funding**

This gap has real consequences. **Locally owned roads and bridges are nearly twice as likely to be in poor condition** as those owned by states, **and 85% of roadway fatalities occur off the interstate system.**

Reauthorization Context

As reflected in AMPO's support for the bipartisan **BASICS Act (H.R. 7437)**, reauthorization presents an opportunity to better align funding with how the system actually functions, while preserving the expanded access to federal funding that regions and local governments achieved under IIJA. Importantly, under the BASICS Act framework, states would also see an increase in formula funding, reinforcing that a more balanced approach to distribution can be a win for all levels of government.

With **Chairman Graves indicating that the committee may hold a markup for the next surface transportation reauthorization bill on April 29**, it is important to emphasize the need to better align funding and planning resources for MPOs, as well as the broader implications of the imbalance between local responsibilities and available federal support. Reauthorization should better enable MPOs and local partners to leverage their expertise and resources to deliver projects more efficiently, which remains a shared interest across both state and local stakeholders.

AMPO encourages MPOs **to continue educating their congressional delegations on the importance of the MPO role, as well as the risks associated with reverting to an 85/15 funding split**, which could significantly impact local and regional transportation infrastructure outcomes.

Congressional Update: A Crowded Path to Reauthorization

Congress is currently navigating a highly compressed and competitive legislative agenda, with several major policy efforts competing for limited floor time and political attention. **The result is a crowded legislative calendar where priorities constantly shift.**

Congress is currently balancing a range of major policy areas, including aviation, housing, DHS funding, the Farm Bill, and potentially another reconciliation package. Each of these efforts requires substantial time and political capital, limiting the capacity to advance other priorities. For MPOs, this means the upcoming surface transportation reauthorization could face delays or reduced floor priority until it rises to the top of the congressional agenda.

***TL;DR:** Congress is currently managing a crowded legislative agenda, including aviation safety, DHS funding and reconciliation efforts, the Farm Bill, housing, and appropriations, all of which are competing for limited floor time and political capital. As a result, surface*



transportation reauthorization may face delays or reduced priority as Congress works through these higher-priority legislative fights.

Context

Congress is working through multiple complex legislative efforts, each consuming significant time and staff capacity and limiting what additional work can move forward. For the House T&I Committee, the [2025 American Airlines crash at Ronald Reagan Washington Airport](#) has become a central focus. In response, both chambers have advanced competing aviation safety bills, with the Senate passing the [ROTOR Act](#) and the House passing the [ALERT Act](#), setting up a difficult negotiation process to reconcile differences between the bills. Key disagreements between committee leadership and stakeholders suggest the process could be lengthy and contentious, with significant opposition from Senate Commerce Chair Sen. Ted Cruz (R-TX) and Ranking Member Sen. Maria Cantwell (D-WA).

Aviation safety bills particularly slow additional transportation focused legislation as they pass through key congressional committees that also work on surface transportation reauthorization (House T&I and the Senate Commerce Committee). More broadly, transportation policy is one of several issue areas competing with other priorities.

Since the government shutdown began in February 2026, the DHS has yet to be funded as Congress disagrees on how to fund immigration enforcement activities. In response, congressional Republicans are attempting to advance a [reconciliation](#) package to fund immigration enforcement officers and DHS to bypass Democrat-led opposition. Internal division over the policies being included in a potential package have complicated and slowed the process. **With a deadline of June 1 imposed by the White House, leadership will prioritize the issue.**

At the same time, Congress is advancing several other major legislative efforts. The [Farm Bill](#), which usually is reauthorized every five years, has now advanced out of the House Agricultural Committee and is pending floor consideration. Housing continues to be an additional priority for both Congress and the White House. The Senate-led [21st Century ROAD to Housing Act](#) has the White House's support but faces resistance in the House. With both chambers having passed competing bipartisan bills that must now be reconciled, the effort will likely be a lengthy process. Additionally, Republican leadership continues to prioritize the [SAVE America Act](#), a high-profile election reform bill that will face significant procedural hurdles and push-back from Democratic members of Congress.

These overlapping priorities likely mean Congress will face a constrained legislative environment where political capital and floor time are limited. With the appropriations process also resuming and with elections in the fall, competition for prioritization will intensify. While **House T&I Chairman Sam Graves publicly revealed that he is targeting an April 29 markup for the next surface transportation reauthorization bill**, its likelihood of advancing beyond committee and receiving dedicated floor time depends on how it competes with these other priorities.



BASICS Act

On Feb. 9, [Rep. Kristen McDonald Rivet \(D-MI\)](#) and [Rep. Rob Bresnahan \(R-PA\)](#) introduced [HR 7437](#), the bipartisan [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](#)

BASICS Act Update

On April 9, [Rep. Jay Obernolte \(R-CA\)](#) and [Rep. Gabe Vasquez \(D-NM\)](#) [signed on as cosponsors for the BASICS Act, representing bipartisan support from four states across the country.](#)

Interest among congressional offices and Members of Congress has elevated in recent weeks, with additional cosponsors pending. This is likely a result of increased support from locals and MPOs, as MPO Policy Boards and MPO Statewide Associations from across the country have either submitted or are in the process of submitting letters of support for the BASICS Act. As reauthorization discussions move forward, building visible support now increases the likelihood that key provisions are reflected in the next surface transportation reauthorization bill. If your MPO Board is interested in signing a letter of support, please contact AMPO's Legislative Director [Katie Economou](#).



➔ [BASICS Act Toolkit](#)

For all things BASICS Act, refer to the LOT Coalition's BASICS Act Toolkit, which includes bill text, summaries, one pagers, action items, and supporting materials.

LOT Coalition Letter to AASHTO

On Feb. 25, the LOT Coalition, including AMPO, sent a formal letter to AASHTO leadership in response to recent public comments regarding the BASICS Act. The response includes a Q&A section directly addressing AASHTO's comments and further explaining the bill's structure and funding assumptions.

We believe it is important to clarify the intent and structure of the legislation. As drafted the BASICS Act is built on growth in the overall federal program and is intended to increase funding for both State DOTs and local and regional partners. The LOT Coalition does not seek to reduce state funding.

➔ [Access the LOT Coalition's Letter to AASHTO here.](#)

Spring Fly-In

On March 17 and 18, AMPO hosted its Spring Fly-In with MPO participation from both our Policy and ART Committees, representing MPOs from across the country.

- Members met with federal partners, congressional offices, and industry leaders, helping inform federal research and policy and amplify the impact of MPOs nationwide.
- Policy Committee members were able to meet with congressional offices to educate and inform staffers on the BASICS Act and how planning funds directly translate into project delivery.

Webinars

On Feb. 19, the LOT Coalition hosted a webinar to share more about the BASICS Act. Please refer to the BASICS Act Toolkit to review the slides and content.

On March 4, AMPO hosted a webinar on: "Inside the BASICS Act: What it Means for MPOs and the Road to Reauthorization." To revisit the discussion, please refer to the following resources:

- [BASICS Act Webinar Slides](#)
- [BASICS Act Webinar Recording](#)

Resources!

Brief your MPO Policy Board on how these priorities affect transportation outcomes in your region:

- [MPO Policy Board Member Letter of Support Template](#)
- [Board Resolution Template](#)
- [Updated BASICS Act PowerPoint](#)

Educate your Congressional Delegation and speak to how the provision would benefit your region:

- [MPO Education Outreach Template](#) to connect with your delegation. Using data-backed, local examples make a difference.

Work through your MPO Statewide Association: Coordinate with MPOs statewide to share a letter in support of the BASICS Act:

- [Statewide MPO Association Letter of Support](#)

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.

Note: Please let AMPO Staff know if you intend to submit any **Letters of Support** and if we can assist you in any way!

Visiting DC? Questions about the BASICS Act? Want to meet with your Delegation?

Please contact AMPO's Legislative Director [Katie Economou](#)



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 finalizing draft sections. All titles **have 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.
 - **Chairman Sam Graves (R-MO) said that the committee is targeting to markup the next surface transportation bill on April 29. He has indicated that topline numbers will be between \$500 and \$550 billion, but this has yet to be agreed on.**
 - 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, EPW is furthest along. Chair Capito (R-WV) has indicated that major action on **the bill may not happen until the summer, and that passing legislation prior to IIJA’s expiration will be a “challenge.”**
- **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 work, midterm elections on the horizon, and the long history of surface transportation bills missing deadlines, **a continuing resolution/extension appears to be likely.** 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

- [!\[\]\(1f101ad452ef9a3f01bb1e89af34fc34_img.jpg\) **Chairman Sam Graves \(R-MO\) Sets Potential Surface Transportation Reauthorization Markup Date:** House T&I Chairman Sam Graves said that he is targeting April 29 to markup the next surface transportation bill. He further indicated that the next bill’s **topline funding levels would be between \\$500 and \\$550 billion** \(a significant reduction compared to the funding levels seen under IIJA’s \\$1.2 trillion in federal](#)



transportation funding). From additional reports, Ranking Member Larsen (D-WA) has indicated that he is targeting a higher topline number, above \$550 billion. Another key provision that Rep. Graves indicated could be included in the next bill is a registration fee for EVs, a provision he sought to include in last year's reconciliation bill (**OBBB**) but was unsuccessful. He stated that a fee would be lower than previously suggested, and that a fee would still be applicable for hybrid vehicles as well.

- [!\[\]\(9063468a59e93f469b71000ac5796bc3_img.jpg\) **Transportation for America \(T4A\) Held Educational Sessions with Congressional Staff on Surface Transportation Reauthorization:**](#) T4A recently held Congressional briefings for Hill staffers on the upcoming federal surface transportation reauthorization, finding **that less than 5% of those attending had worked on the previous surface bill (IIJA)**. The briefings highlighted that previous approaches to the bill have overfocused on funding allocation rather than on specific transportation outcomes such as safety, congestion reduction, or infrastructure repair. T4A made that point that despite spending over \$1 trillion on transportation, roads remain in poor condition, unsafe, and congested, while additional funding has faced administrative barriers to reach the communities that funding was originally intended for. T4A is now pushing lawmakers to demand accountability and outcomes-oriented reforms in the next reauthorization.
- [!\[\]\(1db6320223680ab4bd04b0d269ab6c8a_img.jpg\) **FY2027 President's Budget Included Little on Surface Transportation Reauthorization:**](#) An Eno Center for Transportation analysis reviewed the President's FY2027 budget, noting the omission of any surface transportation reauthorization proposals, an action that differs significantly from the White House proposed \$755 billion reauthorization plan in 2020. Regarding the Highway Trust Fund (HTF), the budget proposed a 2.1% inflation adjustment for FY2027, but general funding levels are similar to those seen in FY2026. The more notable funding proposals occurred within the General Fund, where the IIJA's advance appropriations were discontinued with the exception of \$1.9 billion of the \$36.8 billion made available to USDOT in FY2026 (a 95% cut). In total, the HTF growth is diminished by the cuts seen within the General Fund, in total, reducing surface transportation spending by nearly 25% compared to FY2026 levels.

Introduced Legislation Related to Reauthorization



Whether you want to see what marker bills could be included in the next surface transportation reauthorization or are curious about what Congress is working on, AMPO is tracking all relevant legislation that has been introduced since December 2025. Please refer to our legislation tracker to see what bills have been introduced, who introduced them, and what they would do.

[!\[\]\(96cc62f861fdd6e50510c0224a756dff_img.jpg\) **119th Weekly Congress Legislation Tracker**](#)

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

- [!\[\]\(a9a7cf821bf949be41db724492f295be_img.jpg\) **House financial services works to counter Senate Housing Bill:**](#) Rep. French Hill (R-AR) and Rep. Maxine Waters (D-CA) are working to suggest amendments to the Senate's

21st Century ROAD to Housing Act, aiming to send revised legislative text back to the Senate rather than engaging the Senate through a conference process. Currently, the Senate hopes to pass their version of the bill, arguing that it already reflects bipartisan priorities and that it already has gained support from the Executive Branch. The House has objected to this, raising concerns over provisions that would ban institutional investors from purchasing single-family homes and a provision that would place a temporary ban on a Federal Reserve digital currency (favoring instead a permanent ban). Both chambers are determined to move a bipartisan bill that incorporates and compromises on previously omitted House priorities, ultimately with a broader goal of moving a housing package that avoids long-term negotiation hurdles.

-  **[Eno Center for Transportation \(Eno\) Overview of an Autonomous Vehicle Framework](#)**: Congressional efforts to create a federal regulatory framework for autonomous vehicles date back to 2017 and 2018, when the SELF DRIVE Act passed the House unanimously but its Senate companion, the **AV START Act**, stalled due to opposition over broad preemption of state laws, cybersecurity gaps, consumer protection concerns, and labor worries around autonomous trucking. Now in 2026, Rep. Bob Latta has introduced a third iteration of the **SELF DRIVE Act**, with the key difference being that autonomous vehicles have moved from testing to real-world commercial deployment in cities such as **San Francisco, Austin, and Phoenix**. Concerns that arose in 2018 are now reemerging, with debates over preemption, NHTSA enforcement authority, labor impacts, and now new concerns on international remote vehicle operation. The viability of the legislation depends on whether sponsors can navigate those opposing AV vehicles, whether Congressional leadership includes the framework in surface transportation reauthorization, and whether USDOT backs an AV framework of their own.
-  **[House to Introduce Bill on Permitting Protections](#)**: A bipartisan group of House lawmakers led by Rep. Scott Peters (D-CA) and Gabe Evans (R-CO) is introducing the **CERTAIN Act** to prevent future administrations from revoking legally issued permits, aiming to bring stability to the infrastructure permitting process. The bill would establish clearer timelines, reduce duplicative reviews, and improve coordination among agencies, building on prior House-passed legislation while strengthening provisions around permit certainty. Backed by a bipartisan group of co-sponsors, the effort comes as Senate negotiations on broader permitting reform continue, though the proposal faces criticism from some offshore wind opponents who want the ability to reverse existing project approvals.



Administration & Agencies

USDOT

- **[USDOT to Withhold \\$73 Million in Federal Transportation Funding from New York over CDL Enforcement](#)**: USDOT announced that they will be withholding \$73 million in surface transportation funding (NHPP and STBG) from New York starting in FY2027, citing the state's failure to revoke commercial driver's licenses (CDLs). The action follows recent FMCSA audits alleging that the New York DMV improperly issued CDLs to foreign drivers, and this comes after

the agency rejected the state's compliance claims and moved to invalidate noncompliant licenses. USDOT also warned that an additional \$147 million could be withheld in FY2028 if the state does not meet federal standards.



National News

- [🔗 Apply for Rails to Trails Conservancy's Open Trail Grant:](#) Since 2008, Rails to Trails Conservancy (RTC) has provided over \$3.7 million in grant funding to more than 280 organizations seeking to create, connect, and maintain the nation's trails. The 2026 Trail Grants application window is now [open](#). **All applications are due by 11:59 p.m. ET on May 10.** For the 2026 Trail Grants funding cycle, only projects that support the planning, construction, improvement and maintenance of trails and trail networks in the US will be considered.
- [🔗 Rails To Trails Conservancy Active Transportation Infrastructure Investment Program \(ATIIP\) Sign On Letter:](#) **Rails to Trails Conservancy (RTC) is leading a national sign on letter in support of ATIIP**, the only federal funding program investing in large-scale trail and active transportation networks. RTC invites MPOs to join this national letter to Congress and to [sign by April 30th](#).
- [🔗 Analysis of Housing and Transit Coordination in Minneapolis/St. Paul:](#) The Eno Center for Transportation (Eno) published an analysis on how the Twin Cities region uses a layered, coordinated approach to transit-oriented development (TOD), with the Metropolitan Council setting regional policy, Metro Transit managing a dedicated TOD office, and cities and counties implementing local zoning and grant programs. While the Minneapolis-St. Paul metro ranks well on homeownership affordability compared to coastal cities, significant rental and equity gaps remain with over 27% of households identifying as cost-burdened, with shortages specifically for low-income renters and communities of color. Minneapolis has expanded housing supply and limited significant increases in rent through land-use reform, eliminating parking minimums, legalizing duplexes and triplexes, and adding density along transit corridors. Nevertheless, these efforts must be paired with subsidies and preservation tools to reach lower-income households. Key barriers include local resistance to affordable housing, coordination challenges across more than 180 units of government, and the tendency of transit expansion to lag behind emerging dense neighborhoods. The analysis concluded that effective TOD requires treating housing, land use, and transit not as separate policy tracks but as an integrated community strategy.
- [🔗 New Jersey Governor Proposes Blank Check for World Cup Transportation Funding:](#) New Jersey Governor Mikie Sherrill included an opening in the state's budget proposals that would allow state agencies to spend whatever amounts "are determined to be necessary" to support hosting World Cup matches. The decision is receiving bipartisan criticism from state lawmakers, who are demanding greater transparency and accountability for what the total bill might be. The Governor's office defended the language as flexible and subject to oversight, but neither confirmed a cost estimate nor directly answered questions about the proposal. Concerns are elevated as NJ Transit is expected to suspend commuter service from New York Penn Station around each of the eight New Jersey matches, and the state is already separately proposing temporary tax hikes (on sales, hotel occupancy, and online gaming) tied to the tournament to diminish costs.

- [🔗 Government Accountability Office \(GAO\) Report on Telework and Impact on Travel Behavior](#): A GAO report finds that telework, still about twice as common as in 2019, has significantly reshaped travel behavior, especially in large metro areas, leading to lower public transit ridership and revenue, new patterns in when and where people drive, and shifting demand away from some downtown commercial real estate. In response, many communities and transit providers have adjusted services and studied changing travel needs, but a substantial share of MPOs still lack the tools or guidance to incorporate telework into long-term transportation planning. Although federal law directed the U.S. Department of Transportation to conduct a travel demand study and provide guidance, the agency has not yet established a clear plan or timeline to complete this work, prompting GAO to recommend that it do so to help communities better forecast demand and prioritize future transportation investments.

💰 Notice of Funding Opportunities

- [🔗 All Stations Accessibility Program \(ASAP\)](#): Assists in the financing of capital projects to repair, improve, modify, retrofit, or relocate infrastructure of stations or facilities to make all public area of the station accessible to people with disabilities, including those who use wheelchairs.
 - **Deadline:** May 1, 2026
- [🔗 Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities \(BRIC\)](#): Provides federal funds to states, US territories, federally recognized tribal governments, and local governments for hazard mitigation activities by supporting the modernization of infrastructure and promoting community resilience against natural hazards.
 - **Deadline:** July 23, 2026
- [🔗 Safe Streets and Roads for All \(SS4A\)](#): Supports local initiatives to prevent death and serious injury on roads and streets, commonly referred to as "Vision Zero" or "Toward Zero Deaths" initiatives. The SS4A program supports the US Department of Transportation's (DOT) [National Roadway Safety Strategy](#) and a goal of zero deaths and serious injuries on our nation's roadways.
 - **Deadline:** May 26, 2026
- [🔗 Passenger Ferry Program, Electric or Low-Emitting Ferry Pilot Program, and Ferry Service for Rural Communities Program](#): The ferry grant programs help modernize terminal infrastructure, launch new ferry routes, and fund new ferries to connect American families to their jobs and communities more efficiently.
 - **Deadline:** May 11, 2026

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

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