



The National Beat

March 6, 2026

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Feature Focus

BASICS Act Letter to AASHTO, FAQs, Webinars, and Resources

BASICS Act

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](#)

LOT Coalition Letter to AASHTO

Last week, the Local Officials in Transportation (LOT) Coalition, including AMPO, sent a formal letter to AASHTO leadership in response to [recent public comments](#) regarding the **Bridges and Safety Infrastructure for Community Success (BASICS) Act**.

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.

There appears to be several misinterpretations by AASHTO regarding what the BASICS Act is intended to accomplish. The letter was submitted to clarify our intent, respond to specific public assertions that mischaracterize the bill, and provide perspective on how both State and local partners can succeed together in the next surface transportation reauthorization. **The response also includes a Q&A section directly addressing AASHTO's comments and further explaining the bill's structure and funding assumptions.**

We remain committed to constructive engagement and to advancing a reauthorization framework that strengthens states, MPOs, and local governments alike.

[→ Access the LOT Coalition's letter to AASHTO here](#) or see the Q&A overview below:



Responses to AASHTO's Statements and Assertions:

1. Does the BASICS Act Reduce State DOT Funding?

No. The BASICS Act is designed to increase State funding by 11 percent from FY2026 to FY 2027, not decrease it.

2. Is the BASICS ACT a Dramatic Shift in Surface Transportation Funding Policy?

No. The BASICS Act seeks to maintain at least a 22 percent share of federal transportation funding for local governments, preserving the increased regional and local funding and shift to formula established under IJJA.

3. Would Local Funding Increase from \$50 Billion to \$111 Billion (A 122% Increase)?

No. The BASICS Act shows how to ensure that local governments receive their fair share if funding is allocated from competitive grants to formula.

4. Would the BASICS Act Slow Project Delivery?

No. The BASICS Act aims to improve project delivery by increasing coordination between State DOTs and local governments, boosting PL funding to 2.5%, providing dedicated rural planning funds, giving locals more funding to complete critical projects, and allowing direct allocation of PL funds to MPOs to streamline administration.

5. Which Formula Programs Most Effectively Support the Goals of the BASICS Act?

The BASICS Act is designed to boost predictable formula funding for states and locals through programs like STBG, increase planning funds for MPOs and RTPOs, and expand core bridge and safety formula programs to address infrastructure needs and improve road safety nationwide.

6. Can Long-Standing Structural Challenges Between States and Locals Be Solved Merely with Cooperation and Without Legislation?

The BASICS Act aims to improve coordination between state DOTs, local governments, and MPOs, building on successful regional partnerships while creating structural changes to make project selection and fund obligation more cooperative and effective nationwide.

7. The LOT Coalition is Willing to Negotiate.

The LOT Coalition is and always has been willing to negotiate. The LOT Coalition engaged in multiple discussions and negotiations with AASHTO during development of the BASICS Act and remains open to future collaboration to ensure both state and local governments maintain or increase funding levels in the next surface transportation reauthorization.



What's Next?

The legislation has been introduced in the House and referred to the House T&I committee. The LOT Coalition is 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 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.”
- **On March 4, AMPO hosted a webinar on: “Inside the BASICS Act: What it Means for MPOs and the Road to Reauthorization.”**
 - During the webinar, AMPO staff covered the following:
 - **Background on the BASICS Act marker bill** and how it fits into the broader surface transportation reauthorization landscape
 - **A section-by-section walkthrough** of the BASICS Act
 - **Detailed explanation of provisions** affecting MPO planning funds, project selection authority, bridge and safety investments, and formula programs
 - **Funding assumptions underlying the bill** and how proposed funding shifts would work in practice
 - **Initial responses and reactions to the bill** from stakeholders and policymakers
 - **Strategic considerations for MPO engagement** moving forward
 - **Q&A by AMPO Staff**
 - For those of you who would like to revisit the content discussed during the webinar, please refer to the following resources:
 - **BASICS Act [Webinar Slides](#)**
 - **BASICS Act [Webinar Recording](#)**
 - **We know that many of you have additional questions that were not covered during the Q&A portion of the webinar. AMPO will be hosting a future listening session where members can join and ask any questions about the BASICS Act.**
 - As always, if you have any questions about the bill or are interested in engaging through AMPO or the LOT Coalition, please reach out to Katie Economou, Legislative Director, at keconomou@ampo.org.
- **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, local 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.



Federal Roundup

Congress: Reauthorization and Legislative Activity

Administration & Agencies: USDOT & EPA Updates



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.
 - House timing remains aggressive. Bill text is *expected* to be released in late March, with markups anticipated and potential floor consideration in the 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, 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

- [!\[\]\(065aacad479feea1b3f501fa02b79a7a_img.jpg\) **Where did SS4A Funding Go and What is in the Programs Future?:**](#) The Eno Center for Transportation published an overview of the SS4A program and where the program stands as it enters its final year of authorization under IIJA. **Roughly \$3.9 billion will have been awarded between 2022 and 2025, with about 90% of grants supporting planning and demonstration activities but nearly 70% of total dollars directed toward implementation projects.** The program, which funds local efforts to reduce roadway fatalities through action plans, quick-build demonstrations, and infrastructure improvements, has seen consistent demand nationwide, though with fewer, more costly implementation grants, those have been more geographically concentrated. Legislative proposals such as the [**Safe Streets for All Reauthorization and Improvement Act**](#), introduced by Rep. Steve Cohen (D-TN), would authorize \$5 billion for FY27–FY31 and lower the planning set-aside to 20%, with the goal of shifting more funding toward construction. As Congress considers reauthorization, questions will remain regarding the balance between planning and implementation funding, sustaining local safety culture, and ensuring that developed safety action plans ultimately translate into on-the-ground improvements.
- [!\[\]\(f90d8b6badff022f4fa9e71b17a20969_img.jpg\) **Over 1,100 Organizations and Businesses Call for Transportation Alternative Funding in the Next Reauthorization:**](#) **More than 1,100 organizations, led by groups including Rails to Trails Conservancy and League of American Bicyclists, are urging Members of Congress to protect federal funding for active transportation infrastructure and specifically the Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP).** [**In a letter to congressional leaders**](#), the coalition called for protecting TAP, arguing that investments in sidewalks, bike lanes, and trails improve safety, mobility, economic growth, and public health. By citing rising pedestrian and cyclist fatalities, strong bipartisan public support, and economic data showing billions in annual returns, advocates for active transportation funding have argued that multimodal infrastructure is widely popular across rural, suburban, and urban communities.
- [!\[\]\(aedc732acbf023768f1c9cdaebdbc316_img.jpg\) **The American Public Transportation Association \(APTA\) Releases Surface Reauthorization Priorities:**](#) APTA is urging Congress to pass a long-term Surface Transportation Reauthorization that invests \$138 billion in public transit and \$130 billion in passenger rail over the next five years. APTA argues these investments would generate an additional \$140 billion in economic impacts, support over 40,000 jobs, and strengthen



a \$93 billion industry that connects workers, businesses, and communities across the country. The proposal also calls for accelerating project delivery by streamlining bus and ferry grant programs under the FTA, reforming the CIG program, removing burdensome regulatory requirements, and implementing general USDOT reforms. **APTA also recommends strengthening collaborative, local decision-making by directing funding to small urban transit agencies and ensuring effective transit representation on MPO boards to improve transportation outcomes and enhance safety, innovation, and service delivery.**

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.

[→ 119th Weekly Congress Legislation Tracker](#)

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

- [🔗 Senate Votes to Advance Bipartisan Housing Package:](#) The Senate voted **84–6** to advance the bipartisan **21st Century ROAD to Housing Act**. The legislation would merge Senate and House priorities with provisions supported by the White House. The version of the bill released by Sen. Tim Scott (R-SC) and Sen. Elizabeth Warren (D-MA) includes many of the provisions that were originally in the Senate's **ROAD to Housing Act** as well as six additional measures from the House's version of the bill, and a provision banning certain corporations from buying single-family properties. The legislation would also bar the Federal Reserve from issuing central bank digital currency through 2030. The legislation currently carries with it strong bipartisan support as well as support from the Executive branch.
- [🔗 Senate Introduces Automated Track Inspection Technology Legislation:](#) Sen. Tammy Baldwin (D-WI) and Sen. Josh Hawley (R-MO) introduced the bipartisan **Secure Tracks Act** which would require railroads to use both automated track inspection (ATI) technology and human inspections to improve rail safety. In response to concerns that automated systems can often fail to detect common defects that can cause derailments, **the legislation would require human inspections of major rail lines twice a week, require immediate action when defects are found, and limit regulatory waivers that could weaken safety standards.**



Administration & Agencies



USDOT

- [🔗 USDOT Issues Final Guidance Evaluating Public-Private Partnerships for TIFIA and RRIF](#): The Build America Bureau and FHWA issued final guidance to clarify how public-private partnerships should be evaluated when seeking federal credit assistance through the TIFIA and RRIF programs. The guidance explains value for money analysis requirements for large projects, responds to public comments, and does not create any new legal requirements.
- [🔗 USDOT Announces FIFA World Cup Host City Funding](#): **USDOT announced that the FTA will invest \$100.3 million in public transit systems across US host cities for the 2026 FIFA World Cup** to help accommodate the surge of fans attending matches and related events. Secretary Duffy said the funding will support expanded service and ensure a seamless travel experience as cities prepare to host the global event. The funds, which were made available through the recent Transportation-HUD Appropriations package (see AMPO's Analysis of the THUD Appropriations Bill [HERE](#)), can cover planning, capital, and operating costs, will be distributed based on stadium capacity and number of matches, allow for a 100 percent federal share, and must be obligated within one fiscal year after the tournament concludes.

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.

- [🔗 The "Dalilah Law" Is Introduced in the House and the Senate](#): Following last week's State of the Union Address, Sen. Jim Banks (R-IN) introduced the Senate version of the [Dalilah Law](#), which would prohibit states from issuing CDLs to non-citizens or those who are not lawful permanent residents in the US. This week, Rep. Andy Barr (R-KY) introduced [the House companion bill](#), bolstering congressional support behind [USDOTs recent efforts](#) at limiting CDL issuances to non-domiciled drivers.
- [🔗 Senate Introduces Bill to Combat Cargo Theft and Strengthen CDL Oversight](#): Sen. Todd Young (R-IN) introduced the [Securing American Freight, Enforcement and Reliability in Transport \(SAFER Transport\) Act](#) to address rising cargo theft and strengthen federal oversight of CDLs. The legislation would enhance fraud detection, increase penalties for fraudulent CDL certifications, and end regulatory loopholes for foreign dispatch services. This legislation is currently [supported by the American Trucking Association](#), claiming it will protect supply chains and small trucking companies from complex cargo theft schemes.

EPA

- [🔗 EPA Extends Comment Period for 2015 Ozone Interstate Transport Plan](#): The EPA is extending the comment period for its proposed **Interstate Transport Plan Review for the 2015 Ozone NAAQS**, originally published on Jan. 30, 2026. The extension moves the deadline from March 2 to **March 23, 2026**, in response to numerous requests from stakeholders. The

proposed rule evaluates how states contribute to ozone pollution across state lines, and the EPA is seeking public input on its review. Comments can be submitted [HERE](#) using the Docket ID No. EPA-HQ-OAR-2025-0192.



National News

- [🔗 National Street Safety Index Shows Roadway Safety Disparities Between Northern/Coastal Cities and Sunbelt Cities:](#) **US Safe Streets Index data found significant disparities between roadway safety in older, denser northern and coastal metropolitan areas compared to fast-growing Sunbelt cities.** Places such as New York City rank the safest among the 100 largest metropolitan areas and cities such as Bakersfield, CA, ranked last. The analysis looked at metrics such as VMT, pedestrian exposure to high-speed roads, residential speeding, and commercial motor vehicle activity, all suggesting **that car-oriented development patterns, wider high-speed arterials, and greater driving exposure contribute to elevated risks seen in many southern metropolitan areas.** In northern cities with safer streets, cities were characterized by dense, transit-oriented cities such as Boston and Portland who had higher performance standards. Overall, the report challenges the common notion that large cities are inherently more dangerous and instead links safety outcomes to urban design and transportation patterns.
- [🔗 UCLA Study Reveals the High Cost to Build Parking:](#) A new [study from the UCLA](#) found **that building a new parking space now costs more than buying a new car, with average 2025 construction costs of about \$52,000 per aboveground space and \$73,000 per underground space,** compared to roughly \$50,000 for a new vehicle. The report updates earlier research that showed parking construction costs have risen about 50% faster than inflation since 2012. **Required parking can account for a significant share of total development costs, often adding \$50,000 to \$100,000 per apartment unit,** and may represent up to a third of office construction costs in cities like Los Angeles. The study also found that minimum parking requirements raise housing and commercial development costs, discourage new construction, and have led many cities to scale back or eliminate such mandates.
- [🔗 The National Safety Council \(NSC\) Reports Multi-Year Low for Traffic Fatalities:](#) **The NSC estimated that there were nearly 5,000 fewer fatalities between 2024 and 2025, representing a 12 percent drop to 37,810 deaths – the lowest since 2019.** However, this analysis comes with caveats: NSC is not a government agency and uses a broader definition of crash deaths than NHTSA, counting fatalities that occur on private roads and up to a year after a crash, and its early estimates can shift as death certificate data from the National Center for Health Statistics are finalized. Possible explanations for the decline include the safety impacts of infrastructure investments from IIJA, such as the SS4A program, changes in post-pandemic driving behavior, and new approaches to traffic enforcement. Still, experts caution that the causes remain unclear, and more research is needed to determine which policies are truly saving lives and how to sustain the downward trend.

-  [Urban Institute on Zoning and Housing Affordability](#): An Urban Institute analysis examined how Congress is attempting to tackle the nation’s affordable housing crisis through land-use reform in two major bills: the Senate-passed [21st Century ROAD to Housing Act](#) and the House-passed [Housing for the 21st Century Act](#). The analysis highlighted how both proposals would direct HUD to create guidance on zoning best-practices while also expanding planning and permitting grants; while the Senate passed version would go further by tying Community Development Block Grant ([CDBG](#)) funding to local housing supply growth. The analysis also suggests areas for improvement, including ensuring HUD has the capacity to implement new responsibilities and strengthening coordination between housing and transportation policy. **Notably, it points to an opportunity for more MPO engagement in aligning federal transportation investments with pro-housing land-use strategies**, an approach that could better link transit access, affordability, and smart growth.
-  [Study Warns that Autonomous Vehicles \(AVs\) Could Increase Car Dependency](#): A new study by the University of Texas-Arlington found that the **widespread adoption of AVs could increase VMT by 5-6%**, challenging some claims that said AV adoption would reduce car dependency. While the technology could ultimately improve safety outcomes, expand mobility for seniors and those with disabilities, and support the decarbonization efforts if vehicles are electric, the convenience of low-cost AV travel may encourage additional trips per person, longer commutes, and greater suburban sprawl. The researchers warned of the concept of “eVMT” where autonomous vehicles without passengers could potentially double city driving, eventually straining transit systems and the finances to sustain them. The research suggests that congestion pricing, telework incentives, fleet coordination, and greater AV regulations could limit these effects.

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
- **USDOT is expected to begin releasing FY 2026 NOFOs across programs and modes in the coming months. AMPO will monitor USDOT press releases and keep members informed of any updates.**

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

Recent Editions

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