



# The National Beat

February 27, 2026

## In This Issue

Feature Focus.....	2
🔗 AASHTO Washington, DC, Briefing Update .....	2
🔗 BASICS Act .....	5
Federal Roundup.....	7
Congress .....	7
Congressional “Vibe” Check.....	7
Administration & Agencies .....	9
USDOT .....	9
National News.....	11
Notice of Funding Opportunities .....	12
Recent Editions .....	13

## Feature Focus

AASHTO Conference Update & BASICS Act

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### [AASHTO Washington, DC, Briefing Update](#)

From Feb. 23 – 26, the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) held their annual Washington, DC, Briefing. The event offers a forum for state DOTs and industry professionals to discuss a variety of policy matters in the transportation space. While the event offers both regulatory and legislative updates from the IIJA period, much of the focus for this year's briefing has been on the upcoming surface transportation reauthorization.

Key actors who attended include House T&I Chairman Sam Graves (R-MO) and Ranking Member Rick Larsen (D-WA), Senate EPW Chair Shelley Moore Capito (R-WV) and Ranking Member Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI), FTA Administrator Marcus Molinaro, FHWA Administrator Sean McMaster, and [USDOT Secretary Sean Duffy](#).

***TL;DR:** At AASHTO's Washington briefing, federal and state leaders, including USDOT Secretary Duffy and congressional transportation committee leadership, emphasized **bipartisan surface transportation reauthorization, funding certainty, local control, permitting reform, and safety**. The discussions highlighted priorities for efficiently delivering core infrastructure projects while maintaining predictable, flexible support for states and local governments.*

### Context

During AASHTO's four-day briefing, state DOT colleagues, federal workers, congressional staff, Members of Congress, and the private sector met to discuss the themes of safety, surface transportation reauthorization, and project delivery. These topics reflect what [AASHTO has prioritized](#) throughout the year as well as the messages that they brought to Congress.

Conversations on reauthorization were covered by Secretary Duffy, House T&I leadership, as well as Senate EPW leadership. Consistent with previous messaging from Congress and AASHTO, the focus of the next surface transportation reauthorization will be on **formula funding, improving safety, and speeding up project delivery**.

### What Was Said?

#### **USDOT Secretary Sean Duffy:**

Secretary Duffy focused on cutting federal red tape and reforming permitting rules to help states deliver transportation projects faster and at a lower cost. **He emphasized shifting DOT's attention toward large, nationally significant infrastructure projects that connect our country such as freeways, bridges and highways, rather than bike and pedestrian projects.**

Specifically, with the caveat that the states and locals can choose these projects, **addressing poor road conditions is an interest of the federal government and how they use their funding.**



Duffy also stressed the importance of **giving states more flexibility and addressing rising construction costs**. He also made note of USDOT's recent efforts to strengthen commercial motor vehicle/driver license regulations, and that states should continue these efforts.

**Chairman Sam Graves:**

Chairman Graves emphasized the upcoming surface transportation reauthorization, highlighting that it will be bipartisan through cooperation with House T&I Ranking Member Rick Larsen (D-WA). He noted that a **markup could occur in late March, with a floor vote in the spring**, and described the bill as the most important reauthorization ever, given the gap between current infrastructure and projected needs over the next 20 years.

**Graves indicated the bill would target roughly \$550 billion in funding, focusing on core infrastructure projects like paving, bridge construction**, and other essential work, while also including a robust transit component and a rail title. He emphasized a return to formula funding for states, paired with regulatory reforms, to provide businesses and local governments with a predictable framework for planning and investment. **Graves criticized competitive grant programs and called for the return of earmarks, arguing that shifting authority away from local entities and MPOs to federal bureaucrats undermines effective transportation planning.**

**Ranking Member Rick Larsen:**

As Ranking Member of House T&I, Larsen emphasized that completing a bipartisan surface transportation reauthorization is his top priority. He highlighted the need for a strong bill that **maintains current funding levels, preserves Highway Trust Fund splits, guarantees rail funding, and builds on the progress achieved under IIJA**, noting that consistent investment provides industry certainty, supports jobs, and sustains essential infrastructure.

Larsen also stressed safety as a central focus, calling for accountability measures, highway investments, and meaningful rail safety reform. **He underscored the importance of maintaining direct access to federal transportation funds and local control over project selection for local governments and tribes, emphasizing that local priorities are not always addressed at the state level.** Finally, he **opposed funding restrictions or rollbacks on congressionally approved eligibilities**, arguing that states and localities must retain flexibility to use federal dollars for cleaner transportation, alternatives, and community access improvements.

**Chair Shelly Moore Capito:**

As Chair of Senate EPW, Capito outlined her priorities for the surface transportation reauthorization, emphasizing **highway safety, program modernization and efficiency**, and addressing a broad range of transportation needs. Like Rep. Graves, she is committed to completing the bill by the IIJA's Sept. 30 expiration and **advancing legislation this spring** to begin bipartisan negotiations. Capito also indicated that the next reauthorization will shift away from the discretionary programs established under IIJA and return to a **greater reliance on formula funding**.

**Ranking Member Sheldon Whitehouse:**



As Ranking Member of the Senate EPW Committee, Sheldon Whitehouse said he is optimistic about advancing a bipartisan highway bill this spring in coordination with Chair Capito. He highlighted the growing impact of extreme weather on transportation infrastructure, citing flooding in Rhode Island and wildfires in western states as clear examples of why the next surface transportation bill must **strengthen system resilience against a more volatile climate**. Whitehouse also warned that fossil-fuel-driven climate risks are destabilizing financial and insurance markets, particularly in states like Florida, posing broader economic threats that Congress should consider in long-term infrastructure planning.

Whitehouse emphasized that surface reauthorization itself is not facing a partisan divide in the Senate, but he raised **concerns about the withholding of federal funds for projects Congress has already authorized**. He also noted that permitting reform legislation has stalled but remains an important issue to resolve. Ultimately, he said the shared goal should be ensuring safe highways and maintaining world-class infrastructure for the American public.

#### **USDOT Administrators:**

AASHTO's federal leadership roundtable included a panel of USDOT administrators from FHWA, FRA, FTA, and NHTSA. USDOT leaders highlighted priorities for **accelerating project delivery, improving safety, and harnessing technology to modernize transportation**. FHWA Administrator Sean McMaster emphasized cutting regulatory red tape and collaborating with state DOTs to deliver projects faster, potentially saving years of progress. FRA Administrator David Fink stressed modernizing regulations for both freight and passenger rail while maintaining safety as the highest priority. NHTSA Administrator Jonathan Morrison focused on behavioral safety, enforcement, and expanding the adoption of advanced vehicle technologies, including automated driving, to reduce fatalities. Seval Oz, senior advisor in USDOT's research office, highlighted the essential role of **real-time data, AI, and automated freight corridors** as tools to predict crashes, enhance efficiency, and ensure that innovations work seamlessly across state lines.

#### **Takeaways and Themes**

Messaging from the briefing reflects sentiments previously shared by Members of Congress and USDOT, that surface reauthorization will revert to formula funding, prioritize safety, and ensure transportation decisions are led by bipartisan efforts. More specifically, the following themes were identified across all reauthorization discussions.

#### **Bipartisanship and Timing**

- House and Senate leadership are committed to advancing a bipartisan surface transportation reauthorization this spring.
- Legislation is expected to be introduced in late March, with the goal of completing the bill before the IIJA expires on Sept. 30.

#### **Funding Priorities**

- Consensus is moving federal funding away from discretionary grants toward formula-based funding, reducing reliance on competitive grant programs used in IIJA.



- T&I Chair Sam Graves (R-MO) indicated a target of \$550 billion, prioritizing core infrastructure like bridges and highways, echoing Secretary Duffy's focus on nationally significant projects over bike or sidewalk projects.
- Rail and transit funding will remain guaranteed, building on the progress achieved under IIJA.

### Local Control

- Leaders emphasized local control over project selection and funding allocation. Both Chair Graves (R-MO) and Ranking Member Larsen (D-WA) stressed the importance of access to federal dollars for states, local governments, and tribes.
- Formula funding and earmarks were highlighted as tools to keep decision-making local, ensuring MPOs and local communities retain influence.

### Permitting Reform and Red Tape

- Secretary Duffy and Ranking Member Whitehouse (D-RI) emphasized the need to streamline permitting and reduce red tape, allowing projects to be delivered faster and at lower cost.

### Safety, Efficiency, and Certainty

- Highway and rail safety remain federal priorities.
- Leaders stressed the importance of efficiency and predictability, giving states and businesses the certainty needed for long-term planning and investment.

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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](#)

### **LOT Coalition Letter to AASHTO**

This 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**. You can read the full letter [here](#).

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.

### 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 will host a webinar on “Inside the BASICS Act: What it Means for MPOs and the Road to Reauthorization.” – Register [HERE](#).**
  - During the webinar, we will cover:
    - **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**
- **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 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

- [🔗 \*\*Lawmakers Urge Chaiman Graves to Protect Free Transit Systems:\*\*](#) A group of **11 House Democrats, led by Rep. Grace Meng (D-NY) and Rep. Dan Goldman (D-NY), urged House T&I Chair Sam Graves and Ranking Member Rick Larsen to allow local transit agencies to continue offering fare-free bus service.** The Members of Congress expressed concern over a reported [USDOT proposal](#) that would prohibit such programs, warning it could limit local decision-making and access to affordable, reliable transit. By citing successful free transit initiatives in cities like Richmond, Albuquerque, and Boston, the letter emphasized that maintaining federal flexibility would support ridership, economic opportunity, and equitable public transportation access, while encouraging local innovation.
- [🔗 \*\*The Railway Safety Act of 2026 is Introduced in the Senate:\*\*](#) Three years after the [Norfolk Southern derailment in East Palestine](#), Ohio, and three years after the [failed Railway Safety Act](#), Sen. Jon Husted (R-Ohio) and Sen. Maria Cantwell (D-WA) introduced the [Bipartisan Railway Safety Act of 2026](#). The legislation would mandate defect detection technology, expand hazardous materials safety standards, ensure proper railcar inspections, require two-person crews, and reimburse emergency responders. Currently, the legislation is supported by rail labor unions, local leaders, and safety advocates for protecting communities, railroad workers, and the environment, all while holding railroads accountable.

### 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.

[➔ 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.

- [\*\*Senate ROAD to Housing Act Update:\*\*](#) The Senate's bipartisan [ROAD to Housing Act](#), **designed to boost housing supply, affordability, and oversight, could receive a floor vote as soon as next week**, though timing depends on the current DHS partial government shutdown. While the bill technically passed as part of an amendment to the National Defense Authorization Act last year, it has not had its own Senate vote, and negotiations with the House's [Housing for the 21st Century Act](#) could require additional negotiations. Senate Democrats, led by Sen. Elizabeth Warren (D-MA), oppose adding or removing provisions, particularly 13 community banking measures added by the House, warning it could jeopardize bipartisan support. The White House has weighed in, advocating a ban on institutional investors owning large numbers of single-family homes, though congressional Republicans have expressed resistance to the proposal.
- [\*\*Senate Confirms New Member of the National Transportation Safety Board \(NTSB\):\*\*](#) On Feb. 25, the Senate confirmed (50-45) John DeLeeuw to be a member of the NTSB. DeLeeuw was a former executive at American Airlines, and his nomination has been controversial for two reasons. The first, DeLeeuw is filling the seat of former NTSB Vice Chair Alvin Brown, who had been fired from his position last May and has since had a pending lawsuit alleging the action was illegal and discriminatory – he hopes a federal judge rules that he is still a member of the NTSB. This has specifically drawn criticism from Democratic Senators on the Commerce Committee, such as Sen. Maria Cantwell (D-WA) who, during DeLeeuw's committee hearing, [raised concerns about DeLeeuw filling a position currently amid a federal lawsuit](#). Second, independent boards such as the NTSB, are often supposed to be composed of both Republican and Democrat leaning officials. The NTSB currently has three Republican members and no members from the opposing party. This has additionally drawn criticism from Democrats, saying the lack of bipartisanship undermines the confidence in these agencies, especially as the NTSB addresses the [American Airlines crash at Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport](#) in 2025.



## Administration & Agencies

### USDOT

- [\*\*USDOT Seeks Input on ROUTES Initiative:\*\*](#) USDOT is requesting input on the [ROUTES Initiative](#) from rural and Tribal communities on transportation infrastructure needs, challenges, and opportunities, specifically focusing on infrastructure condition, usage, safety, technology, funding barriers, and grant experiences. ROUTES provides technical assistance, resources, and tools to help these communities access federal funding and improve safety, connectivity, and economic competitiveness. Use the following docket number to leave comments: [Docket No. DOT-OST-2026-0298](#).
- [\*\*FTA Administrator Marcus Molinaro Steps Down:\*\*](#) **FTA Administrator Marcus Molinaro will be leaving the administration after less than a year at USDOT.** As a former US Representative for New York's 19<sup>th</sup> District, Molinaro will return to New York where he will run



for a New York State Assembly seat. Reports have indicated that his reason for leaving is based on personal matters and his intent on working with local constituents again.

- [!\[\]\(ef9d0f80c5c0f7b4bed9fcc98d310922\_img.jpg\) \*\*USDOT Seeks Nominees for the Railroad Safety Advisory Committee \(RSAC\):\*\*](#) The FRA is seeking nominations for members on RSAC, to provide advice and recommendations to Secretary Duffy and the FRA Administrator on rail safety matters. The committee would consist of 25 members with representatives from the railroad, labor, supplier, and manufacturing sectors.
- [!\[\]\(999a5e3fc9b7a6ab64b477dbcd2c0571\_img.jpg\) \*\*FHWA Launches New Round of Every Day Counts Innovations:\*\*](#) FHWA launched the eighth round of its [Every Day Counts Initiative](#), highlighting proven tools to help states and local partners deliver projects faster and improve roadway safety. More than 15 states have already adopted elements of the new innovations. The latest round promotes nighttime work zone safety, alternative contracting methods, coordinated data sharing, digital project delivery, early utility mapping, and expanded drone use for inspections.
- [!\[\]\(4a22a098f67aa2577f972ec4d67f1799\_img.jpg\) \*\*USDOT Releases New Rule on State Truck Parking Initiatives:\*\*](#) **USDOT released new guidance that now requires states to include truck parking assessments in their freight plans.** States must evaluate how well they and private partners provide parking and rest areas for trucks or risk losing National Highway Freight Program (NHFP) funding. Plans must be updated every four years and cover topics like road wear from heavy vehicles, freight bottlenecks, congestion, cargo flow, port inventories, e-commerce impacts, and military freight. While creating a state freight advisory committee is optional, states that have one must consult it when developing or updating their plans.
- [!\[\]\(cc98cec0bccb74dd8513e7d4ab71b1e8\_img.jpg\) \*\*NHTSA Seeks Public Comment on a United Nations Automated Driving System Regulation:\*\*](#) NHTSA is seeking public comment on a proposed Global Technical Regulation for Automated Driving Systems developed by a United Nations working group and has extended the comment period by 15 days. The feedback will help inform the US position and any potential future domestic safety regulations for automated vehicles. Use the following docket number to leave comments by March 10, 2026: [Docket No. NHTSA-2026-0034](#).
- [!\[\]\(387c11e31cceec9930b7807a52410275\_img.jpg\) \*\*Ryan McCormack Confirmed to be USDOT Undersecretary for Policy:\*\*](#) On Feb. 26, Ryan McCormack was confirmed (**57-33**) by the Senate to be the next undersecretary for policy at USDOT. McCormack was previously the deputy chief of staff at USDOT for Secretary Duffy and he served as legislative director for Secretary Duffy while he was a member of the House. McCormack will now help lead policy efforts aimed at reducing highway fatalities and improving the access and delivery of grants.

### **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.

- [!\[\]\(85a64cee26b8066e550d7db90a8b63f6\_img.jpg\) \*\*USDOT to Require English CDL Tests:\*\*](#) USDOT announced that all commercial truck and bus drivers will have to take their CDL tests in English to ensure that they can read road signs and communicate with law enforcement. This is a part of USDOT's recent crackdown on identifying unqualified drivers. USDOT also plans to establish greater oversight of testing

centers and enforcement of existing English-proficiency rules, following multiple fatal crashes in 2025.

-  [USDOT Proposes Rule to Target Chameleon Carriers](#): On Feb. 20, Secretary Duffy announced a series of proposed federal rulemakings aimed at cracking down on “chameleon carriers” that evade enforcement by reopening under new DOT numbers and on noncompliant entry-level driver training programs. Duffy said the proposals would end self-certification for driver training schools, overhaul the federal motor carrier registration system to strengthen identity verification, tighten procedures for suspending unsafe carriers, require states to conduct all CDL testing in English, and add new broker qualification requirements, all with the goal of improving safety and removing bad actors from the industry.
-  [Congress Urged to Pass Bill to Establish Stringent Standards for Non-Domiciled CDLs](#): During the State of the Union on Feb. 24, Congress was urged to pass “The Dalilah Law,” legislation that would prohibit states from issuing CDLs to undocumented immigrants. The proposal would be named after the 5-year-old Dalilah Coleman who was injured in a 2024 crash involving a non-domiciled truck driver. The following day, [Sen. Jim Banks \(R-IN\) formally introduced the Dalilah Law \(S.3917\)](#), cosponsored by Senators Jim Risch (R-ID), James Lankford (R-OK), and Shelley Moore Capito (R-WV). **The introduced legislation would require states, as a condition of receiving federal transportation funding, to limit CDLs to US citizens, lawful permanent residents, and certain visa holders, as well as revoke CDLs that have been issued to undocumented immigrants, mandate English-only CDL testing, and require all CDL holders to recertify within 180 days.** For those who are found to be operating a commercial vehicle without lawful status, they would face a lifetime disqualification.



## National News

-  [Supreme Court Ruling on Tariffs](#): On Feb. 20, the Supreme Court ruled that many of the existing tariffs applied under the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA) were unconstitutional. The decision reaffirmed that Congress has the authority to set tariffs as they are a tax. **The White House proceeded with a temporary 10-15% tariff under the Trade Act of 1974, allowing the tariffs to last 150 days.** While the ruling emphasized Congressional authority over tariffs, the newly applied tariffs will ensure that legal and political challenges will continue.
-  [Study Finds that Most Paint-Only Bike Lanes are on the Busiest Roadways](#): A new study in the Journal of Cycling and Micromobility Research **finds that about 61% of paint-only bike lanes in the US are located on “high-stress” roadways, fast, multi-lane arterials where most riders feel unsafe.** Led by UC San Diego using data from PeopleForBikes across 442 cities, the analysis suggests many roadway designers are placing unprotected lanes on roads ill-suited for them, which may increase crash risks and undermine public confidence in bike infrastructure. While high-stress lanes are more common in the South and West, the study notes that updated 2024 guidance from the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials advises against using conventional painted lanes on high-speed, high-volume roads, signaling a potential shift toward more protective designs in the future.

- [🔗 Washington State to Complete Nation’s First Statewide Inventory of Sidewalks](#): Washington State is nearing completion of the nation’s first statewide inventory of all sidewalks and pedestrian paths. The project, called OS Connect (Open Sidewalks), was developed by Dr. Anat Caspi and will eventually be paired with tools for professionals and the public to identify gaps and accessibility issues. The initiative demonstrates how large datasets can improve pedestrian infrastructure while promoting “anti-ableist AI” that keeps the human perspective central. [A conference](#) is planned to explore the challenges and opportunities of using this data to make lasting improvements nationwide.
- [🔗 Autonomous Freight Operations to Begin in Houston and Dallas](#): Bot Auto and Ryan Transportation are partnering to launch driverless autonomous freight operations between Houston and Dallas this spring. The collaboration will focus on a roughly 200-mile route in a corridor that is usually challenging for human drivers due to tight delivery windows and hours-of-service limits. Bot Auto’s autonomous trucks avoid issues like driver fatigue, offering consistent, precise service. This partnership follows Bot Auto’s previous autonomous pilot with Steves & Sons and its first driverless hub-to-hub run in Houston.
- [🔗 Florida Legislature Passes E-Bike Bill](#): The Florida Senate unanimously passed SB 382, sponsored by State Sen. Keith Truenow, which **would impose a 10-mph speed limit on e-bikes when operating within 50 feet of pedestrians, require riders to yield and provide an audible signal when passing, and create an Electric Bicycle Safety Task Force under the Florida Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles** to recommend further regulations. The task force could propose measures such as minimum age requirements, licensing, and registration as use of electric-assist bicycles and electric motorcycles surges and safety concerns grow, particularly following high-profile crashes and fatalities. [As PeopleForBikes notes](#), bills of this type often confuse electric-assist pedal bicycles with powerful electric motorcycles, which are driven without pedaling and can reach much higher speeds. The bill, backed by law enforcement, school boards, and senior advocates, now heads to the Florida House, with lawmakers aiming to address safety and clarify rules for micromobility devices across the state.

## Notice of Funding Opportunities

- [🔗 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.](#)



## Recent Editions

- [February 20th \(2026\)](#)
- [February 13th \(2026\)](#)
- [February 6th \(2026\)](#)
- [January 29<sup>th</sup> \(2026\)](#)
- [January 23<sup>rd</sup> \(2026\)](#)
- [January 15<sup>th</sup> \(2026\)](#)
- [January 9<sup>th</sup> \(2026\)](#)
- [December 19<sup>th</sup> \(2025\)](#)
- [December 11<sup>th</sup> \(2025\)](#)
- [December 5<sup>th</sup> \(2025\)](#)
- [November 20<sup>th</sup> \(2025\)](#)
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