



The National Beat

July 17, 2026

In This Issue

Feature Focus.....	2
🔗 OMB Proposed Uniform Grant Regulation.....	2
Spring into Summer: Key Federal Updates from the Supreme Court, USDOT, and Congress.....	2
🔗 21st Century ROAD to Housing Act: MPO Specific Housing Provisions.....	4
Federal Roundup.....	5
Congress.....	5
Congressional “Vibe” Check.....	5
National News.....	9
Recent Editions	10



Feature Focus

OMB Proposed Rule Comments, Federal Update, and 21st Century ROAD to Housing Act Analysis

[OMB Proposed Uniform Grant Regulation](#)

The comment period for OMB's proposed government-wide changes to federal grant requirements closed on July 13, 2026. [AMPO submitted comments](#) on July 8 raising several implementation concerns for MPOs, including grant termination, reimbursement and documentation, conferences and professional development, reputational risk, public outreach, and the need for clear guidance.

Even with the comment period closed, AMPO still encourages MPOs to **share their real-world examples and concerns with their congressional delegations**. Please use [AMPO's Tailorable MPO Letter Template](#) as a starting point. Option 1 provides a shorter, project-focused approach for sharing regional examples, while Option 2 provides more detailed language organized by issue area.

Additional resources include [AMPO's OMB Rule Analysis](#) and [PowerPoint briefing](#). Please reach out to [Katie Economou](#), AMPO Legislative Director, with any questions or for assistance tailoring talking points.

[Spring into Summer: Key Federal Updates from the Supreme Court, USDOT, and Congress](#)

[Supreme Court](#)

On June 29, the Supreme Court issued multiple highly anticipated opinions regarding the powers of the Executive Branch. The Court's opinion for the case of the President of the United States v. Slaughter held that the Executive Branch has the authority to remove members of independent agencies that exercise executive power. In the specific case, the opinion references the 2025 removal of then FTC Commissioner appointee, Rebecca Slaughter. With a final ruling of 6-3, the opinion overturns the 1935 Humphrey's Executor decision, which previously protected appointees to independent agencies, especially from removal based on political ideological differences. In the decision, the justification for overturning the 91-year precedent was that those who exercise the duties of the Executive Branch are also subject to removal by the President to ensure that they remain accountable.

Although this ruling has specific implications for the FTC, this decision ultimately impacts two independent transportation agencies that were previously facing similar challenges: the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) and the Surface Transportation Board (STB). In 2025, [Alvin Brown was removed from the NTSB](#) and [Robert Primus was removed from the STB](#), both having been previously appointed under Democratic leadership. While both challenged their removal, the



Supreme Court's decision ultimately solidifies the President's authority to remove them. These positions have since been filled since Primus' and Brown's removal, with Richard Kloster joining the STB and John DeLeeuw joining the NTSB. This decision occurred during a contentious period for both independent transportation agencies, with the [NTSB recently finishing their investigation of the 2025 Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport crash](#) and the STB currently considering the proposed [\\$85 billion between Union Pacific and Norfolk Southern](#).

[USDOT, BUILD Grant Update](#)

On July 7, USDOT announced \$1.73 billion in FY 2026 BUILD grant awards for 127 infrastructure projects across 52 states, territories, and DC. The grants will support investments in improving roads, bridges, ports, transit, rail, truck parking, and aviation infrastructure. USDOT received nearly 1,200 eligible applications requesting more than \$14.5 billion in transportation funding. Categories funded in this round include:

- Roads and Bridges: \$1.3 billion
- Transit Projects: \$169.9 million
- Port Infrastructure: \$136.8 million
- Freight and Passenger Rail: \$87.7 million
- Truck Parking: \$62 million
- Aviation Infrastructure: ~\$11 million

Awarded projects can be found [here](#).

[Congress](#)

As reported in AMPO's [April 17 National Beat](#), Congress is considering multiple significant pieces of legislation in addition to working on the next surface transportation reauthorization, of which they have fewer than 10 scheduled legislative days to pass the legislation before September. With time running out, surface transportation reauthorization will likely require an extension as the Sept. 30 expiration of the IIJA approaches.

[Appropriations](#)

On July 16, Speaker Mike Johnson (R-LA) indicated that Congress will likely need to pass a stopgap funding measure to avoid a government shutdown ahead of the end of the government's fiscal year on Sept. 30. While this is a common effort during midterm elections, additional pressure is mounting on this year's appropriations process with Republican Members of Congress calling for the [SAVE America Act](#) to be attached to any continuing resolution.

Regarding USDOT funding, both House Appropriation's Chair Tom Cole (R-OK) and House Appropriations Transportation, Housing, and Urban Development (THUD) Subcommittee Chair Steve Womack (R-AR) expressed concern on whether the Committee-passed [FY 2027 THUD](#)



[funding bill](#) will reach the House floor for consideration before August recess and before a stopgap is passed. Both chairs indicated that House floor delays stemming from disputes over the SAVE America Act have slowed consideration of FY2027 appropriations. House floor activity largely stalled prior to the July 4 recess after disagreements over the SAVE America Act prevented consideration of several major bills, [including the annual National Defense Authorization Act \(NDAA\)](#). The NDAA was also blocked by [Senate Democrats on July 16](#). This sets up a contentious appropriations season before Congress leaves for August recess and before a stopgap is needed this fall to avoid another government shutdown.

What this means for surface transportation reauthorization is that any movement or potential floor consideration of the legislation will be delayed to advance the priorities of both Senate and House leadership.

Reconciliation 3.0

On July 15, the House proposed a \$95 billion party-line funding reconciliation package that would provide \$73 billion for military and intelligence agencies, and \$12 billion for farm assistance. This package would notably avoid the Senate filibuster process and allow up to roughly \$10 billion toward election-related priorities that Republican Members of Congress and Senators, in addition to the White House, have been hoping to enact through reconciliation and as portions of the SAVE America Act.

What is Reconciliation?

A budget reconciliation is an expedited legislative process that allows Congress to pass certain budget-related changes with a simple majority vote in the Senate by avoiding the filibuster, subject to specific procedural rules and requirements.

With the legislation being introduced in the House Budget Committee, Republicans will be looking to gain support for the package, an effort that will prove to be difficult given the legislations likelihood of [increasing the deficit](#). To add to the complications, the [Senate is currently unsure of a third reconciliation](#) package, with key Senators, Majority Leader John Thune (R-SD) and Senate Appropriations Chair Susan Collins (R-ME) expressing hesitations with the current House framework and strategy. Senate Republicans have also expressed concerns about the package's lack of offsets, whether defense and agriculture funding levels are sufficient, and the overall feasibility of advancing another reconciliation bill before the elections.

As a result, reconciliation, appropriations, and the SAVE America Act are likely to consume significant congressional floor time and political capital over the coming months. This will make floor consideration of a surface transportation reauthorization increasingly difficult before the Sept. 30 deadline.

[21st Century ROAD to Housing Act: MPO-Specific Housing Provisions](#)



Background

On July 11, the **21st Century ROAD to Housing Act** became law after passing Congress with bipartisan support. The legislation aims to expand housing affordability, reduce barriers to housing production, and encourage local investment in housing supply. While much of the legislation focuses on housing policy and finance, several provisions create opportunities for MPOs to engage more directly in housing-related planning efforts that intersect with transportation planning. Key MPO-relevant provisions include:

- **Sec. 107: Housing Supply Frameworks** – Directs HUD to develop voluntary housing supply guidelines and best practices, with input from local and regional transportation planning organizations.
- **Sec. 207: Grants for Planning and Implementation Associated with Affordable Housing** – Establishes a competitive HUD grant program supporting housing planning activities.
- **Sec. 208: Innovation Fund** – Creates a competitive grant program for local governments and Tribes that demonstrate improvements in housing supply and reductions in housing development barriers.
- **Sec. 209: Accelerating Home Building Act** – Establishes a grant program to support streamlined design review and permitting processes for certain low-rise and mid-rise housing types.

These provisions provide new opportunities for MPOs to support housing supply, affordability, and location-efficient development through existing regional planning activities. **For a detailed analysis of the legislation and its implications for MPOs, see [here](#).**



Federal Roundup

Congress: Reauthorization and Legislative Activity



Congress

Congressional “Vibe” Check

Reauthorization. Reauthorization activity continues to accelerate as committees refine draft language that shapes the next surface transportation bill.

Where things stand:

- **House T&I. The BUILD America 250 Act was passed out of committee on May 21 with a 62-2 vote** following a nearly 15-hour markup that considered nearly 300 amendments. The **bill authorizes approximately \$580 billion**, with 90% available through formula funding, a significant shift from the IIJA's heavier reliance on competitive grants.
 - Currently, the legislation is awaiting consideration by the House Ways & Means Committee, and a markup has yet to be set. House T&I Chairman Sam Graves (R-MO) announced that full House consideration of **the bill will likely have to wait**



until after August recess once Members of Congress return in September, of which he said that an extension is probable.

- **Senate.** Among Senate committees, EPW is furthest along. Chair Shelley Moore Capito (R-WV) indicated that top line funding levels have yet to be decided and that the Senate Commerce Committee has yet to release legislative text. Sen. Capito said that if there were an extension, the committee would target a December 2026 deadline. She did not express interest in a full-year extension.
 - Sen. Capito did express interest in completing negotiations prior to the August recess and then holding a markup once Congress returns.

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, **an 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 the bill is significantly harder via amendment.

The Buzz on Reauthorization

-  [LOT Coalition Launches “Home Team” Push](#): The Local Officials for Transportation (LOT) Coalition is beginning a state-level “home team” push focused first on members of the EPW Committee as the Senate develops its surface transportation reauthorization proposal. The coalition—made up of AMPO, the National Association of Counties, the National League of Cities, the National Association of Development Organizations, the National Association of Regional Councils, and the U.S. Conference of Mayors—is bringing together MPOs, cities, counties, rural/regional planning organizations to provide Senate offices with a coordinated message on local/regional transportation priorities and serve as on-the-ground contacts for Senate offices.
 - **Engagement Opportunity:** MPOs in states represented on EPW may have already received outreach from AMPO; those that have not and are interested in participating should contact [Katie Economou](#), Legislative Director.
-  [New AMPO BUILD America 250 Resources](#): AMPO has also released a new [Tailorable MPO Board Letter of Support Template](#) that MPOs can customize with local projects and regional priorities. Members can also use the following resources to support board and congressional engagement:
 - [Tailorable MPO Board Briefing Presentation](#)
 - [Analysis and Legislative Guide](#)
 - [Slide Deck Summary, Summary Handouts](#)
 - [LOT Coalition BA250 One Pager](#)
-  [Chambers of Commerce Urge House Action on BUILD America 250 Act](#): On July 14, the US Chamber of Commerce and hundreds of state and local chambers urged House leadership to prioritize floor passage of the BUILD America 250 Act, citing its transportation investments,



project delivery reforms, and greater certainty for states, local governments, transit agencies, and private-sector partners.

- **Engagement Opportunity:** AMPO members are encouraged to connect with their chambers of commerce to share how the bill could benefit their communities and explore opportunities for coordinated educational outreach to congressional delegations.
- [!\[\]\(36f8637baaa56c4be44b454435949289_img.jpg\) **Climate Mayors Release Surface Transportation Reauthorization Priorities:**](#) Climate Mayors' surface transportation reauthorization priorities call for significantly increasing direct federal funding and decision-making authority for local governments, preserving competitive grant programs, strengthening transportation resilience, and expanding investments in safety, transit, active transportation, and EV infrastructure to improve affordability and community outcomes. The memo also urges Congress to protect awarded IIJA grants from cancellation, increase local control over formula funding, and support freight and multimodal transportation policies that enhance reliability, reduce costs, and improve resilience.
- [!\[\]\(b556e0ef1e10ccfc32976edb6416074f_img.jpg\) **Urban Institute Overview of Transit Funding Changes in BA250 Legislation:**](#) The Urban Institute estimates that the House's BUILD America 250 Act would reduce federal transit funding by at least 23% compared with the IIJA, leaving every state with less formula funding and forcing many transit projects to compete for reduced discretionary funding. The report argues these cuts would make transportation less affordable, particularly in rural and underserved communities, and urges Congress to restore transit funding to IIJA levels and provide guaranteed, long-term funding certainty.
- [!\[\]\(cf1529ba638f0498d7e334e7a79dd058_img.jpg\) **Congressional Budget Office \(CBO\) Projects BA250 Impact on HTF:**](#) The CBO estimates that the House surface transportation reauthorization bill would increase Highway Trust Fund shortfalls to nearly \$100 billion for highways and \$48 billion for transit by 2031, despite new registration fees on electric and hybrid vehicles. While the proposed fees would generate about \$12 billion over 10 years, the analysis concludes they would not be sufficient to offset higher authorized spending or meaningfully improve the trust fund's long-term finances.
- [!\[\]\(2c071b2b285393c82ac6838d54fa5656_img.jpg\) **Eight Previous Secretaries of Transportation Call on Senate to Advance Transportation Safety in Next Surface Bill:**](#) Former US Transportation Secretaries **James Burnley, Samuel Skinner, Andrew Card, Rodney Slater, Mary Peters, Ray LaHood, Anthony Foxx, and Elaine Chao** sent a bipartisan letter to Senate Commerce Committee Chairman Ted Cruz (R-TX) and Ranking Member Maria Cantwell (D-WA) urging Congress to advance a surface transportation reauthorization that promotes evidence-based policymaking, technological innovation, and flexible, performance-based safety policies. The former secretaries argued that future transportation safety improvements will depend on fostering emerging technologies, such as artificial intelligence, automation, and predictive analytics, while maintaining rigorous federal safety oversight.

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 issues on the Hill are drawing attention this week outside of reauthorization.

- [🔗 Senator Lindsey Graham Passes Away at Age 71:](#) On July 11, Sen. Lindsey Graham (R-SC) passed away unexpectedly. He served a critical role in brokering agreements between Congress and the White House, playing an influential role in foreign policy issues in addition to serving on various high-profile committees. Of significance, his death leaves multiple vacant positions on key committees including the Budget, Judiciary, and Finance Committees. It is expected that his position as chairman of the Senate Budget Committee will be filled by Sen. Ron Johnson (R-WI).
- [🔗 Senate Seeking Permitting Reform Before Recess:](#) Senators from both parties are racing to reach a bipartisan permitting reform agreement before the August recess, but negotiations remain stalled over environmental review changes, transmission policy, and limits on federal agency authority to cancel approved energy projects. With the legislative calendar quickly fading and political disagreements persisting, advocates warn that delaying action until after the elections could jeopardize the chances of passing a comprehensive permitting reform package this Congress.
- [🔗 House Appropriations Committee Want to Require FHWA to Study Congestion Pricing:](#) House Republicans are directing the FHWA to study the financial impact of New York City's congestion pricing program on suburban commuters, including toll costs by ZIP code and alternatives to relying on congestion toll revenue. The proposal reflects continued Republican opposition to the Metropolitan Transportation Authority's (MTA) congestion pricing initiative and calls for recommendations to improve the MTA's finances without using congestion-based tolling.
- [🔗 House Reintroduces High-Speed Rail Act:](#) Rep. Seth Moulton (D-MA) has reintroduced the American High-Speed Rail Act, which would authorize \$205 billion over five years and provide guaranteed, long-term funding for high-speed rail while encouraging transit-oriented development and private investment. The bill is positioned as an alternative to the House's BUILD America 250 Act, with supporters arguing that sustained rail investment would improve mobility, boost economic development, and meet growing public demand for high-speed passenger rail.
- [🔗 House T&I Chairman Sam Graves \(R-MO\) on FEMA Reform:](#) House T&I Committee Chairman Sam Graves (R-MO) argued that FEMA requires fundamental reform, citing persistent bureaucracy, rising disaster costs, and slow recovery efforts despite multiple past reform laws,

and highlighted bipartisan work on the [Fixing Emergency Management for Americans \(FEMA\) Act](#). Rep. Graves said the legislation aligns closely with recommendations from the FEMA Review Council, including shifting to a state-led, locally executed, federally supported disaster response model, providing upfront rebuilding grants, and accelerating mitigation investments.

- [House Democrats Send Letter to OMB Regarding Recently Proposed Rule on Federal Grantmaking](#): Reps. Troy Carter (D-LA) and Nikki Budzinski (D-IL) are circulating a [Dear Colleague letter](#) urging the OMB to withdraw or substantially revise its proposed rule on "Regulation for Federal Financial Assistance," arguing that it would politicize and fundamentally reshape the administration of more than \$1 trillion in annual federal grants. The letter contends the proposal would expand political control over grantmaking, impose vague ideological compliance requirements, disrupt existing federal awards and programs, and increase administrative burdens for grant recipients.



National News

- [DRCOG Expands Metropolitan Planning Area](#): Colorado Governor Jared Polis has approved an expansion of the Denver Regional Council of Governments' (DRCOG) metropolitan planning area boundary to include Clear Creek and Gilpin counties, marking DRCOG's first MPO boundary expansion since 2007. The approval follows roughly two years of outreach and coordination and brings the two mountain counties, already part of DRCOG, its Agency on Aging, and the state-defined Transportation Planning Region into the MPO boundary as well, helping better align formal transportation planning responsibilities with existing regional relationships.
- [European Approach to Non-Urban Destination Accessibility](#): The article argues that the US should expand safe walking and cycling infrastructure in non-urban vacation destinations by adopting European approaches, such as protected multi-use paths, traffic-calmed rural roads, and sidewalks. Beyond reducing congestion and improving transportation options, these investments would create more enjoyable, accessible, and sustainable travel experiences while encouraging Americans to embrace active transportation in their own communities.
- [The Need for More Driver Education](#): The article argues that reducing traffic fatalities requires treating high-quality driver education as a public safety investment by expanding professional training requirements, improving instruction for new and immigrant drivers, and emphasizing risk management and decision-making over simply passing licensing exams. The author contends that better-prepared drivers would help prevent crashes, save lives, and reduce the enormous social and economic costs of unsafe driving.
- [Pennsylvania Passes State Budget Without Transit Funding](#): Pennsylvania enacted its FY 2026–27 budget without providing new funding for public transit operations, marking the fifth



consecutive year that transit agencies have not received a long-term state operating funding solution. As a result, many agencies continue to face service cuts, fare increases, and deferred maintenance while state lawmakers continue to debate potential new revenue sources for transit.

-  [**Georgia DOT Looks to Receive Full NEPA Review Authority for Federally Funded Highway Projects:**](#) The Georgia DOT is seeking public comment on its application to assume full National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) review authority for federally funded highway projects under the FHWA Surface Transportation Project Delivery Program (23 U.S.C. § 327). If approved, Georgia would become the tenth state with full NEPA Assignment, a change intended to streamline environmental reviews, improve project delivery, and reduce delays, with public comments accepted through **August 23, 2026**.

Notice of Funding Opportunities

-  [**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
-  [**Public Transportation on Indian Reservations \(Tribal Transit\) Competitive Program:**](#) Provides funds for planning, public transportation capital projects, operating costs, job access reverse commute projects, and the acquisition of public transportation service to tribes located in rural areas (those with a population under 50,000).
 - **Deadline:** Aug. 25, 2026
-  [**Innovative Coordinated Access and Mobility \(ICAM\) Pilot Program:**](#) Provides competitive funding to support innovative projects for transportation disadvantaged populations that will improve the coordination of transportation services and non-emergency medical transportation services.
 - **Deadline:** Sept. 9, 2026

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

Recent Editions

- [July 10 \(2026\)](#)
- [June 26 \(2026\)](#)
- [June 18 \(2026\)](#)
- [May 29 \(2026\)](#)
- [May 15 \(2026\)](#)
- [May 7 \(2026\)](#)
- [May 1 \(2026\)](#)

 View all past editions of the **National Beat** Policy Newsletter [here](#)