



ASSOCIATION OF METROPOLITAN
PLANNING ORGANIZATIONS

REAUTHORIZATION

Introduction to Reauthorization for MPOs

Questions? Reach out to Katie Economou, AMPO Legislative Director at keconomou@ampo.org

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Understanding Reauthorization

Reauthorization shapes how federal transportation funds are allocated, impacting long-term infrastructure investments. This guide provides an overview for MPOs to navigate and advocate effectively during the reauthorization process.



Summary of Topics

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ORGANIZATIONS

TRANSPORTATION FUNDING 101

TRANSPORTATION FUNDING

Federal transportation funding is essential for MPOs to carry out long-term regional planning and deliver key infrastructure projects. The primary source of this funding comes from the **Highway Trust Fund (HTF)**, which is financed primarily through federal fuel taxes on gasoline and diesel.

THE HIGHWAY TRUST FUND

The HTF is divided into two main accounts:

1. **Highway Account** – Funds highways, bridges, and roadway infrastructure projects.
2. **Mass Transit Account** – Supports public transit systems across the country.

The Highway Trust Fund (HTF) is primarily funded through federal fuel taxes on gasoline and diesel. However, these rates have not increased since 1993, resulting in a widening gap between revenue and transportation needs. Since 2008, Congress has supplemented the HTF with transfers from the general fund to keep it solvent.

AMPO'S
HTF REPORT



AMPO's HTF REPORT



Key Funding Programs for MPOs

MPOs rely on several federal programs funded through the HTF to carry out their planning and project implementation responsibilities.

The reauthorization of the surface transportation bill impacts the core funding mechanisms that MPOs rely on to execute their planning and programming functions.

METROPOLITAN PLANNING (PL/5303):

These formula funds support MPO planning activities and are allocated to all MPOs based on population and other factors. They fund transportation studies, staff, and long-range planning efforts.

SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BLOCK GRANT (STBG)

Funds support road, bridge, and multimodal projects. In areas with populations over 200,000 (i.e., Transportation Management Areas or TMAs), a portion is directly suballocated to MPOs. For smaller MPOs, the state determines the funding allocation

CONGESTION MITIGATION AND AIR QUALITY IMPROVEMENT (CMAQ)

This program funds projects aimed at reducing transportation-related emissions. CMAQ funds are suballocated to TMAs, while in smaller regions they are often administered by the state.

CARBON REDUCTION PROGRAM (CRP)

Funds projects that reduce greenhouse gas emissions from transportation. Like other programs, CRP is suballocated to TMAs, and is often state-administered in smaller areas.

TRANSPORTATION ALTERNATIVES (TA) SET-ASIDE

Funds projects focused on improving non-motorized transportation options, such as bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure. TA funds are suballocated in TMAs, with administration varying in smaller regions.

DISCRETIONARY GRANT PROGRAMS

Several discretionary grant programs that MPOs are eligible to apply for or benefit from could be impacted by the surface transportation reauthorization process. Examples of discretionary programs include RAISE, SS4A, and SMART grants.

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AMPO's POLICY
ROADMAP

REAUTHORIZATION 101

WHAT IS REAUTHORIZATION?

The Surface Transportation Reauthorization is a critical component of the federal transportation policy cycle, setting the funding and policy framework for surface transportation programs over a multi-year period, typically five to six years. Through this process, Congress updates federal policies to address the nation's evolving infrastructure needs and challenges. These decisions directly shape how transportation projects are planned, funded, and implemented across states and regions, influencing everything from long-term investments to local project priorities.

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

Reauthorization is a key opportunity to shape the policies and funding frameworks that directly impact communities nationwide. It determines how federal transportation funds are allocated to states and regions, influencing priorities like resiliency, safety, transit, mobility, and innovation. Reauthorization also impacts the core funding mechanisms that MPOs rely on to execute their planning and programming functions. By understanding this process, MPOs are better positioned to advocate for long-term solutions that align with local and regional priorities and to engage effectively with federal policymakers to ensure regional needs are addressed.

Timeline

The reauthorization process involves key legislative steps, from initial discussions to bill implementation. Understanding these timelines helps MPOs advocate effectively at each stage.





Note: The reauthorization process varies, but it typically follows a multi-year cycle. Historically, reauthorization bills face delays, requiring short-term extensions to maintain funding.

Recent Reauthorization History	Legislation	Fiscal Years & Surface Transportation Funding	Key Impacts & Themes	Select Notable Programs
	Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA)	1992-1997 <i>\$155 billion</i>	First major shift to empower MPOs; emphasized multimodal and regional planning More funding flexibility Learn more	National Highway System (NHS) established Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) program
	Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21)	1998-2003 <i>\$218 billion</i>	Expanded MPO authority and planning factors Strengthened environmental considerations and innovative financing tools Learn more	Transportation Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (TIFIA) Expanded Surface Transportation Block Grant (STBG)
	Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU)	2005-2009 <i>\$244.1 billion</i>	Formalized public participation plans Increased Planning Funds Encouraged public-private partnerships Learn more	Safe Routes to School program Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP)
	Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century (MAP-21)	2012-2014 <i>\$105 billion</i>	Introduced performance-based planning requirements Strengthened MPO accountability Learn more	National Performance Management Goals Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP)
	Fixing America’s Surface Transportation (FAST) Act	2016-2020 <i>\$305 billion</i>	Expanded transit funding and resiliency programs Increased focus on freight and safety Learn more	National Highway Freight Program (NHFP) Grants for freight Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) Pilot Program Build America Bureau
	Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA)	2021-2026 <i>\$567 billion</i>	Historic funding increase Expanded MPO eligibility in competitive programs Focus on equity and resilience goals Learn more	Carbon Reduction Program (CRP) Promoting Resilient Operations for Transformative, Efficient, and Cost-saving Transportation Program (PROTECT) National Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (NEVI) Program New discretionary grants (ex: Safe Streets & Roads for All)

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ENGAGE AND ACTIVATE

The Role of MPOs in the Reauthorization Process

MPOs play a vital role in translating federal policies into regional plans and projects. MPOs ensure that local governments and communities have a say in how those funds are spent. During reauthorization, MPOs can:

Build Relationships with Congressional Offices

Demonstrate how federal transportation policies directly impact your region's projects and communities.

Share Data-Driven Stories

Highlight successful projects funded by federal programs like CMAQ and STBG to show the real-world impact of federal investments.

Participate in National Coalitions

Work with organizations like AMPO to strengthen advocacy efforts, especially for MPOs with limited capacity for direct federal engagement.

Develop Policy Priorities

Identify and communicate both regional needs and broader MPO priorities, such as increased planning funds, reduced local match, and more direct access to federal dollars.

ENGAGE & ADVOCATE

AMPO'S ENGAGEMENT TOOLKIT

The toolkit equips MPOs with resources to effectively engage with policymakers and communicate key priorities



AMPO's ENGAGEMENT
TOOLKIT

AMPO

AMPO's Advocacy Toolkit

MPO Advocacy Toolkit

Congressional Compass Map

Advocacy Resources

Advocacy in Action

Get Involved with AMPO

The Association of Metropolita...

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AMPO's 119th Congressional Compass

Search by MPO, Representative, or Location

AMPO's Congressional Compass

Search to identify your MPO's respective Congressional Representatives.

Click the search box and type in:

- MPO name or FHWA MPO ID
- An address or choose Use current location

Results will include information about features of interest.

For questions, please contact Katie Economou, Transportation Policy and Intergovernmental Affairs Manager, at keconomou@ampo.org

Use my location

Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs)

USA Congressional Districts (119th Congress)

Legislative Priorities: Strengthening MPOs

Advocate for stronger federal policies by sharing key legislative priorities to empower MPOs, streamline funding, and deliver impactful transportation solutions.

We encourage MPOs to use AMPO's [Legislative Priorities one-pager](#) when engaging with members of Congress and transportation stakeholders. This resource highlights key federal policy priorities that directly impact MPOs, including increased planning funds, reduced local match requirements, direct recipient status for federal funds, and shifting certain discretionary programs to formula funding. By incorporating these priorities into your meetings, you can help ensure that MPO needs are understood and supported at the federal level. Learn more about key legislative priorities for MPOs in [AMPO's Roadmap to Reauthorization](#).

Use the [Congressional Compass](#) tool to identify your representatives and share this vital information to advocate for policies that strengthen regional transportation planning. Click the button below to download the [Legislative Priorities one-pager](#).

Legislative Priorities One-Pager

MPO 101: Educating Decision-Makers

Equip members of Congress and transportation leaders with a clear understanding of the vital role MPOs play in shaping regional transportation and community growth.

We encourage MPOs to utilize AMPO's [MPO 101 brief](#) as a key resource when engaging with members of Congress and other transportation stakeholders. This brief outlines the history, role, and essential functions of MPOs in shaping regional transportation planning and investments. It also highlights AMPO's national legislative priorities.

Use AMPO's [Congressional Compass](#) tool to identify your representatives and share these materials during your meetings to advocate for stronger, locally-driven transportation solutions. Click the button below to download the [MPO 101 brief](#).

MPO 101 Brief

AMPO'S ENGAGEMENT TOOLKIT



AMPO'S ENGAGEMENT
TOOLKIT

POLICY EDUCATION & BRIEFS

- Legislative Priorities
- MPO 101 Brief
- Issue Papers & Survey Reports
- Reauthorization 101
- One-pagers
- Presentations
- Data
- Podcasts

ENGAGEMENT TOOLS

- 119th Congressional Compass
- Key Messaging Framework
- Congressional Outreach Templates
- Meeting Request Templates
- Customizable MPO Briefs
- Tips for Engaging Congressional Staff
- ... *and more!*

Get Involved!

AMPO

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