



The National Beat

August 28, 2026

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August Recess and AMPO's Annual Conference

With Congress in recess and many Members of Congress and Senators focused on the upcoming midterm elections, it has been a quiet August in Washington, DC. This has given us at AMPO time to reflect and prepare for our [upcoming Annual Conference in Sacramento, California, from Sept. 14-18](#). At the conference, we will be excited to unveil this year's Policy Roadmap, reflecting on the work at both AMPO and by members of our [Policy Committee](#) and [Intergovernmental Affairs Group](#) over the last few years. AMPO and its members have made significant progress on the priorities we set out to achieve at last year's Annual Conference in Providence, Rhode Island – whether it was through reviewing legislation, preparing public comments for regulations, or engaging congressional offices.

For those of you who will be joining us in Sacramento next month, we are looking forward to seeing you all. **Please be sure to stop by the Policy Pitstop** to discuss any questions you might have, to hear about developments at the federal level, or to simply introduce yourself. We are also excited to discuss this year's Policy Roadmap, revealing what progress we have made on previous priorities and what we plan on achieving in 2027.

Roadmap to Reauthorization



AMPO's Policy Resources



Full Steam Ahead: MPO Engagement

While it has been a slow August, this is nevertheless a critical time for MPOs to be engaging their delegations and preparing for educational outreach following November's midterm elections. Changes in congressional delegations, committees, and party leadership will require renewed engagement and education, and create a great opportunity for MPOs to establish themselves as transportation resources for congressional offices.

[→ AMPO's Overview of Midterm Elections](#)

This is also an important time to **continue engaging your congressional delegations as the Senate finalizes their version of the surface transportation reauthorization legislation**. Congress will be in another month-long recess this October, making it a great opportunity to engage your delegations while Members of Congress and Senators are in-state. While Congress is



likely to consider an extension of current authorization levels, it is critical to communicate the need for:

- Increases in PL funding to continue the important role of planning in helping communities identify the right projects for their regions, save money, provide technical assistance, and move projects through the federal process faster.
- Additional flexible funding through formula programs like STBG.
- Continued investment into bridge infrastructure programs.
- Continued investment into roadway safety funding through programs such as HSIP and SS4A.

For more information on how you can engage your delegations, please see our [policy resources](#) and outreach materials below:

- [MPO BA250 Board Letter of Support Template](#)
 - [BA250 Tailorable MPO Board Briefing Presentation](#)
 - [MPO Educational Outreach Template](#)
 - [MPO Local Elected Official Board Member Outreach Template](#)
 - [AMPO's National Beat Archive](#)
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Federal Roundup

Congress: Reauthorization and Legislative Activity

Administration: USDOT, EPA, & DOC



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.
 - The bill still needs action from the House Ways and Means Committee on its revenue provisions before it can move to the House floor.
 - Full House consideration of **the bill will have to wait until after August recess** once Members of Congress return in September.
- **Senate.** EPW is the furthest along of the Senate authorizing committees. Chair Shelley Moore Capito (R-WV) is [targeting September for release of the committee's highway title](#) and has indicated that EPW needs to move before the Banking, Commerce, and



Finance committees finalize the transit, rail, safety, and revenue portions of the broader package. Her goal is to complete the full bill by the end of the year.

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.

- [🔗 House to Consider Senate Proposed Continuing Resolution \(CR\):](#) House Republican leaders are expected to bring the Senate-passed CR to the floor early next week, extending government funding through Dec. 11 and helping avoid a shutdown ahead of the November midterm elections. The measure was negotiated with Senate Democrats and could pass the House under a fast-track process requiring a two-thirds majority, with some House Democrats signaling support. However, some Republicans may oppose a provision temporarily blocking the administration's OMB proposal that would give political appointees greater control over federal grant approvals.
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Administration & Agencies

USDOT

- [🔗 USDOT Announces the “America’s Great Corridors of Commerce Initiative”:](#) USDOT launched **America’s Great Corridors of Commerce (AGCC)**, a voluntary initiative allowing state DOTs and railroads to lease transportation rights-of-way for utilities such as transmission lines, fiber optic cables, and water pipelines. The Build America Bureau is seeking public input through an RFI and plans to select up to five initial corridors, with the program intended to accelerate infrastructure deployment, streamline permitting, and generate lease revenue for transportation maintenance and upgrades.
- [🔗 Amtrak Experienced Record Ridership:](#) Amtrak is experiencing consistent ridership growth, driven by improved service, new trains, infrastructure investments, and increased demand for alternatives to driving and flying. This growth could be limited by current proposals that would reduce passenger rail funding, limiting Amtrak’s ability to maintain and expand service, despite growing ridership and successful new and restored routes.

EPA

- [🔗 EPA Report Reveals Chemical Exposure Risks From the 2023 East Palestine Derailment:](#) An initial federal modeling assessment after the [2023 train derailment](#) in East

Palestine, Ohio, projected that nearly 18,000 people could face potentially severe exposure to phosgene, while roughly 2,000 could face exposure levels potentially resulting in death. The EPA said the model represented a worst-case scenario and that subsequent modeling showed substantially lower risks, while some criticized the government for not publicly disclosing the initial projections.

DOC

-  [**White House Looks to Set Tariff on Canadian Automobiles and Parts:**](#) The auto industry warns that escalating US-Canada trade tensions could pose a threat to US and Canadian automakers, with a potential 50% tariff on Canadian vehicles and parts set to take effect Jan. 1. Despite the potential tariffs, automakers are taking a cautious approach to lobbying the White House with hopes of reviving negotiations while avoiding escalation, especially given the uncertainty of the tariffs and the future of USMCA.



National News

-  [**Union Pacific and Norfolk Southern Rail Merger Could Bolster Atlanta Passenger Rail:**](#) The proposed Union Pacific–Norfolk Southern merger could create an opportunity to expand passenger rail in Atlanta by diverting up to 80% of freight trains onto a belt-line bypass, potentially freeing capacity for 14 commuter rail lines. Supporters argue the roughly \$6 billion project could reduce congestion and improve freight movement, but it would require significant state leadership and cooperation among the railroads, with the merger still under review by the Surface Transportation Board.
-  [**Strong Towns Publishes Report on What Has Happened Since Completion of the Interstate System:**](#) Strong Towns released a report arguing that transportation projects should be judged not by whether they are completed, but by whether they actually solve the problems they were intended to address and whether they deliver lasting benefits to communities. It makes arguments against continued highway expansion as a response to congestion, emphasizing alternative measures such as accessibility, safety, affordability, and long-term maintenance when evaluating whether transportation investments are successful.
-  [**How to Modernize Permitting to Lower Construction and Housing Costs:**](#) The Federation of American Scientists published an article arguing that Colorado can reduce housing costs by modernizing permitting for routine, low-risk residential projects, where inconsistent requirements and administrative delays increase costs for homeowners and contractors. It recommends a risk-based permitting framework, state incentives for local governments to adopt fast-track processes, and a regulated third-party certification pathway, while preserving local inspection, enforcement, and public-safety authority.



Notice of Funding Opportunities

-  [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
-  [Buses and Bus Facilities Infrastructure Program](#): The Grants for Buses and Bus Facilities Competitive Program (49 U.S.C. 5339(b)) makes federal resources available to states and direct recipients to replace, rehabilitate and purchase buses and related equipment and to construct bus-related facilities, including technological changes or innovations to modify low- or no-emission vehicles or facilities.
 - **Deadline:** Sept. 21, 2026
-  [Low or No Emission Grant Program](#): The Low or No Emission competitive program provides funding to state and local governmental authorities for the purchase or lease of zero-emission and low-emission transit buses as well as acquisition, construction, and leasing of required supporting facilities.
 - **Deadline:** Sept. 21, 2026
-  [Bus Safety, Accessibility, and Innovation Research Program](#): Supports the development of standard designs and prototypes that will make existing and new buses safer for operators, riders and vulnerable road users, as well as more accessible for passengers.
 - **Deadline:** Sept. 28, 2026

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

Recent Editions

- [August 21 \(2026\)](#)
- [August 14 \(2026\)](#)
- [August 7 \(2026\)](#)

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