



The National Beat

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Feature Focus

AMPO's Analysis of the Proposed Policy Guidance for the Capital Investment Grant (CIG) Program, AMPO's Analysis of the Bipartisan American Affordability and Jobs Act (BAAJA), & AMPO's Member Resources and Customizable Comment Template for the Census Bureau's Proposed Rule

[AMPO Analysis of the FTA's Proposed Policy Guidance for the Capital Investment Grant \(CIG\) Program](#)

On Oct. 1, the FTA issued a request for comments on proposed policy guidance for the CIG program. The proposal includes earlier project development milestones, changes to how projects are rated, a new formula for determining the federal CIG share, expanded use of project warrants, stricter financial review, and other changes that could affect projects already in the pipeline.

At a high level, the following proposed changes were made:

- Earlier NEPA and project development milestones
- A 50 percent non-CIG funding commitment requirement before engineering phase for New Starts and Core Capacity projects
- Greater weight on cost effectiveness, mobility, and congestion relief
- New adjustments to the federal CIG share based on birth and marriage rates
- Expanded warrants that could simplify review for qualifying projects
- Stricter financial evaluation and annual engineering phase oversight
- Immediate application to projects already in the CIG pipeline, although approved CIG shares would remain locked for New Starts and Core Capacity projects already in the engineering phase.

[AMPO's Analysis of the Proposed CIG Policy Guidance](#)

Comments

To better understand how the proposed guidance may impact MPOs and CIG projects across the country, AMPO is developing comments to formally submit to the FTA. **Comments to FTA are due Nov. 16, 2026** – AMPO welcomes feedback from members to better understand how these changes could affect projects and regions.

To help inform AMPO's approach, please **send regional examples, concerns, or recommendations** to [Katie Economou](#), Legislative Director, and [Ryan Coady](#), Legislative Associate.

[AMPO's Analysis of the Bipartisan American Affordability and Jobs Act \(BAAJA\)](#)



On Sept. 30, leaders of the Senate EPW and Energy and Natural Resources (ENR) Committees introduced the [Bipartisan American Affordability and Jobs Act \(BAAJA\) of 2026](#). The legislation would make significant changes to NEPA along with other permitting processes and environmental reviews. Potential implications for MPOs include:

- **Shorter project development timelines:** Changes to Federal environmental review and permitting requirements could accelerate certain transportation projects.
- **Greater emphasis on early coordination:** MPOs may have an important role in coordinating with state and local partners, engaging stakeholders, and identifying potential project issues earlier in the planning process.
- **Expanded categorical exclusions:** Certain infrastructure projects, particularly those involving existing facilities or rights-of-way, could qualify for streamlined environmental review or exemptions.
- **Greater project certainty:** Changes to judicial review and federal authorization requirements could reduce uncertainty following project approvals.
- **Regional infrastructure planning considerations:** New transmission planning requirements and streamlined energy infrastructure permitting could affect regional development patterns and infrastructure coordination.

For a more in-depth analysis of the legislation, please review [AMPO's analysis of the Bipartisan American Affordability and Jobs Act \(BAAJA\)](#).

[Census Bureau's Proposed Rule on Residence Criteria and Demographic Questions: MPO Materials](#)

On Sept. 10, the [Census Bureau and the Department of Commerce \(DOC\) issued a proposed rule](#) that would alter the existing census residence criteria and additionally proposed the removal of specific demographic questions from the decennial census. The proposed rule could have significant impacts on MPO funding and suballocation, designation status, forecasting and modeling inputs, Title VI compliance, and small-geographic or demographic analyses.

 For more context, please see [AMPO's Sept. 25 edition of the National Beat](#)

Based on MPO member feedback, [AMPO submitted comments on Sept. 30](#), focusing on the technical implications of the proposed rule for MPOs. AMPO additionally submitted a letter, in cooperation with National Association of Regional Councils (NARC), and the National Association of Development Organizations (NADO), to [request a 60-day extension of the comment period](#). **The comment period has been extended until Nov. 2.**

To assist MPOs with submitting comments of their own, AMPO has developed a customizable MPO comment letter template that MPOs can use to submit official comments to the Federal Register, and to provide examples of how the proposed rule could impact your region. Please see AMPO's Census Bureau resources below:

- [AMPO Comment Letter](#)



- [MPO Tailorable Comment Letter Template](#)
- [Sept. 25 National Beat Analysis](#)
- [Census Proposed Rule Webinar Recording](#)
- [Decennial Census of the Population of Americans; Proposed Residence Criteria and Proposed Regulations for Demographic Questions](#)
- [CRS Report: Citizenship and Residence Criteria for the 2030 Census: Recent Developments](#)
- [Submit Comments on Regulations.gov](#)



Federal Roundup

Congress: Reauthorization and Legislative Activity
Administration & Agencies: USDOT & Treasury



Congress

Congressional “Vibe” Check

Reauthorization. Reauthorization discussions have slowed significantly as the November midterm elections approach and as Congress enters a month-long recess to campaign in-state. [The recently passed continuing resolution](#) extended the IIJA deadline to Dec. 11, giving Congress two paths forward: pass a full surface transportation reauthorization ahead of that deadline, or pass another extension that pushes reauthorization into 2027.

Right now, an extension looks far more likely. Congress will have little floor time to consider a full reauthorization bill before December, and competing priorities with other major legislation make passage of the next surface bill unlikely in that window, particularly since the Senate has not yet introduced its version of a surface bill and the House has not held a full floor vote on its version. The most probable outcome in the next few months is another IIJA extension into spring 2027.

Where things stand:

- **House.** The BA250 Act is currently pending consideration by the House Ways and Means Committee. Chair Jason Smith (R-MO) said that the committee is discussing the legislation but there is uncertainty about when it will be brought forward for committee consideration. House Speaker Mike Johnson (R-LA) indicated that reauthorization is a priority, and said he hopes to bring it for floor consideration following midterm elections.
 - *House T&I Subcommittees:* With House T&I Chair Sam Graves (R-MO) retiring, Republicans will look for new leadership. Currently, Rep. David Rouzer (R-NC) is likely to take the gavel. To replace Rep. Rouzer’s position as Highways and Transit Subcommittee chair, Rep. Mike Bost (R-IL) is said to have expressed interest, while for Democrats, Rep. Salud Carbajal (D-CA) is said to similarly be interested in the position as either Subcommittee Ranking Member or Chair.

- **Senate.** EPW is the furthest along of the Senate authorizing committees. Chair Shelley Moore Capito (R-WV) announced that her committee would not release legislative text for the next surface transportation bill until after the midterm elections, meaning reauthorization will have to wait until the November lame duck period.
 - Senate Banking also plays a critical role in the development of the next surface transportation bill, handling the transit title of the legislation. The committee's Ranking Member Elizabeth Warren (D-MA) expressed uncertainty about when her committee would release legislative text, with Senate EPW Ranking Member Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI) indicating that a transit title still requires significant progress.

The Buzz on Reauthorization

-  [The Congressional Budget Office \(CBO\) Releases Report on the BUILD America 250 Act:](#) The CBO released a report on the BA250 Act, providing an overview of the legislation's effect on government revenue and the Highway Trust Fund (HTF). CBO estimates that BA250 would increase federal revenue by \$2.8 billion and direct spending by \$1.7 billion over 2026–2031, reducing the deficit by about \$1.1 billion, while authorizing \$333.7 billion in spending subject to appropriation.

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.

-  [USDOT Releases Apportionment Tables for Continuing Resolution \(CR\) Extension Period:](#) USDOT and FHWA published federal-aid highway program funding apportionment tables for Oct. 1 through Dec. 11, 2026. This apportionment table reflects the extension of surface transportation programs under the [Aug. 8 CR](#). The apportionment notice includes state funding levels for key formula programs such as NHPP, STBG, HSIP, and CMAQ. Included with state apportionment tables are compliance penalties for both federal open container requirements and DWI or DUI repeat offender federal requirements. In addition, following last year's FMCSA audit of state CDL practices, New York and California were penalized for CDL noncompliance. Specifically, each state saw reductions in NHPP and STBG funding as a result of [USDOT's recent CDL enforcement effort](#).



Administration & Agencies

USDOT

-  [**States Sue USDOT Over Revised CAFE Standards:**](#) Democratic-led states and cities sued USDOT over revised CAFE standards, arguing that the 34.9 mpg requirement fails to meet the law's mandate to set the "maximum feasible" fuel economy standards. USDOT defended the weaker standards as a way to reduce upfront vehicle costs, while the states argue they will increase gasoline consumption and refueling costs. [**Environmental groups also filed separate lawsuits**](#) to challenge the rule, arguing that it does not require automakers to make meaningful fuel-economy improvements because the 34.5 mpg standard already reflects current industry performance.
-  [**USDOT Announces Two TIFIA Awards for Virginia's Commonwealth Transportation Board:**](#) The USDOT announced up to \$89.7 million in TIFIA loans to Virginia for safety and capacity improvements along 325 rural miles of I-81, a major freight corridor carrying 43% of the state's interstate truck traffic. The projects include truck climbing lanes, interchange and merge improvements, and bridge replacements, supporting Virginia's \$4 billion I-81 Corridor Improvement Program and aiming to reduce congestion, improve safety, and strengthen regional freight movement.

Treasury

-  [**US Agrees to Hold Off on Diesel Export Ban:**](#) The Treasury announced that they will not pursue a ban on US diesel exports after European countries agreed to release 100 million barrels of diesel and crude oil from strategic reserves over four months. The White House is still considering other measures to lower diesel prices, including encouraging states to lift restrictions on off-road diesel and suspend diesel excise taxes.



National News

-  [**How Proper Building and Zoning Codes Can Support Missing Middle Housing Development:**](#) A Strong Towns article looked at how missing middle housing development can be improved, but that legalizing triplexes through zoning is only the first step, because building-code requirements can make three-unit projects significantly more difficult and costly to permit than otherwise similar duplexes. The experience of Minneapolis and Memphis suggests that policymakers should examine the permitting and construction process, not just zoning changes, to understand why newly legal housing types are not being built at expected rates.
-  [**How Walkable Cities also Benefit Drivers:**](#) An international [**report**](#) found that cities can improve conditions for drivers while prioritizing walking, biking, and transit by separating streets designed primarily for vehicle movement from streets designed as people-centered places. Strategies include creating connected networks of "flow" and "place" streets,



shortening trips through land-use policies, and making parking more predictable rather than simply increasing parking supply.

-  [**Texas Declares State of Disaster to Utilize Untaxed Diesel Fuel:**](#) Texas declared a statewide fuel emergency allowing motorists to use untaxed dyed diesel on state roads, but the exemption does not override federal law, meaning users could still face federal penalties unless the IRS issues a waiver. [**With the White House potentially eyeing an Executive Order**](#) to mirror state efforts to make diesel more affordable, potentially including a nationwide waiver on dyed diesel. Ultimately, this could reduce Highway Trust Fund fuel tax receipts and shift limited diesel supplies away from its other applications such as agriculture.
-  [**California Passes Legislation to Help Integrate Climate and Housing Planning with Regional Transportation Planning:**](#) California signed SB 1087 to modernize regional planning requirements, streamline Sustainable Communities Strategies, extend GHG reduction targets through 2045, and better align state transportation funding with regional plans. The legislation builds on the 18-year experience of [SB 375](#) and was supported by more than 80 organizations, including California MPOs, transportation agencies, environmental groups, businesses, and housing advocates.
-  [**North Carolina Suspends Gas Tax Until Nov. 30:**](#) North Carolina voted unanimously to suspend the state's 41-cent-per-gallon gas tax through Nov. 30, providing relief amid high fuel prices linked to the war in Iran. The estimated \$360 million in lost transportation revenue will be replaced with funds from the state's inflation reserve to prevent disruptions to road projects and maintenance. The bill now heads to the governor for signature.

Notice of Funding Opportunities

-  [**Promoting Resilient Operations for Transformative, Efficient, and Cost-Saving Transportation Program \(PROTECT\):**](#) The PROTECT Competitive Grant Program provides funding to plan for and make surface transportation more resilient to current and future weather events, natural disasters, and changing conditions, such as severe storms, flooding, drought, levee and dam failures, wildfire, rockslides, mudslides, sea level rise, extreme weather, including extreme temperatures, and earthquakes.
 - **Deadline:** Oct. 9, 2026
-  [**Wildlife Crossing Pilot Program \(WCPP\):**](#) The WCPP provides funding to eligible entities for projects seeking to improve safety of the traveling public by reducing the number of wildlife-vehicle collisions (WVC) and, in doing so, improve habitat connectivity for terrestrial and aquatic species.
 - **Deadline:** Nov. 16, 2026

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

Recent Editions



- [October 2 \(2026\)](#)
- [September 25 \(2026\)](#)
- [September 4 \(2026\)](#)

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