



## Top Stories

**7/25/17** – The [House](#) and [Senate](#) Appropriations Committees have both approved a number of FY 2018 appropriations measures that include agriculture, energy, environment, interior, and transportation (House only). While significant uncertainty remains regarding the future of the FY 2018 process, funding levels in both chambers are slightly below FY 2017 levels, but significantly above the spending reductions proposed by the president earlier this year. Stay tuned to NCSL throughout the fall for further updates on FY 2018 appropriations.

**7/20/17** – The Trump Administration released its first [Unified Agenda](#) of Regulatory and Deregulatory Actions, which provides an updated report on the actions administrative agencies plan to issue in the near and long term. A number of contentious regulations from the previous administration are listed including: the Clean Water Rule; the Clean Power Plan; the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) hydraulic fracturing guidelines; and the Department of Interiors (DOI) methane venting and flaring rule, among others.

**7/19/17** – President Donald Trump issued an executive order (EO) ["Establishing a Presidential Advisory Council on Infrastructure"](#). The 15-member Council will report on "funding, support, and delivery of infrastructure projects in several sectors, including surface transportation, aviation, ports and waterways, water resources, renewable energy generation, electricity transmission, broadband, pipelines, and other such sectors as determined by the council."

**7/7/17** – The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) [awarded](#) \$230 million in Airport Improvement Program (AIP) grants for 104 airports across the country. The airport grant program

funds various types of airport infrastructure projects, including runways, taxiways, and airport signage, lighting, and markings, which helps to create thousands of jobs. Funding is provided based on passenger volume.

**6/28/17** – Dan Elwell was [appointed](#) FAA Deputy Administrator. Elwell previously served at the FAA as the assistant administrator for policy, planning, and environment from 2006-2008. Most recently, he was senior advisor on aviation to U.S. Secretary of Transportation Elaine L. Chao.

**6/28/17** – Amtrak [announced](#) Richard Anderson as its next president and chief executive officer. Anderson was formerly CEO of Delta and Northwest Airlines.

**6/28/17** – The Department of Transportation (DOT) [announced](#) the start of the Infrastructure for Rebuilding America (INFRA) competitive grant program, replacing the FASTLANE grant program that was created by the 2015 FAST Act. The INFRA program will have access to the same level of federal funding as FASTLANE, as well as many of the same goals. However, DOT will now put additional consideration towards a project's potential for innovation, ability to leverage federal funding and include performance and accountability metrics.

**6/29/17** – The Congressional Budget Office [predicted](#) that the Highway Trust Fund will stay solvent through the end of the Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act, which expires Sept. 30, 2020—but both the highway and transit accounts would go into the red in 2021.

## From Congress

**7/10/17** – The Senate approved [Neomi Rao, 54-41](#), as administrator of the White House Office of Management and Budget’s Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs. Rao is an associate professor of law and founder of the Center for the Study of the Administrative State at Antonin Scalia Law School.

## From the Administration

**7/25/17** - The National Highway and Transportation Safety Administration (NHTSA) will take [public comment](#) on what information it should consider when preparing an environmental impact statement for the next phase of CAFÉ standards that affect mileage year 2022-2025 vehicles.

**7/19/17** – The FAA [announced](#) that airline passengers should not pack laptops and other large electronic devices in checked baggage due to fire risks, based on a three-month study completed after the administration imposed a temporary ban on carrying electronics on some flights to the United States.

**7/12/17** – The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) [announced](#) \$226.5 million in competitive grant funding for transit bus projects nationwide. The Grants for Buses and Bus Facilities Infrastructure Investment Program is authorized by Congress to improve the condition of bus infrastructure nationwide by funding the replacement and rehabilitation of buses and related facilities. The application period closes Aug. 25.

**7/12/17** – The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) [released](#) a comprehensive planning effort for the Northeast Corridor to identify ways to improve the reliability, capacity, connectivity, performance and resiliency of passenger rail service throughout the Northeast Corridor through 2040 and beyond.

**7/12/17** – NHTSA announced that it is [suspending](#) higher fees on automakers who violate vehicle mileage standards while it considers whether to permanently lower them. The penalty for exceeding an applicable Corporate Average Fuel Economy (CAFE) standard was among the penalties adjusted for inflation in the interim final rule. In addition, NHTSA is [seeking comment](#)

on whether and how to amend the civil penalty rate for violations of such standards.

**7/7/17** – FRA [released](#) its draft environmental impact statement for a new rail tunnel under the Hudson River between New Jersey and New York, and repairs to the current tunnel. Cost to construct a new tunnel are \$11.1 billion, while revamping the current one could cost \$1.8 billion. A final environmental impact statement is anticipated in March 2018.

**7/7/17** – The Federal Highway Administration’s (FHWA) Inspector General is [launching](#) a surface transportation audit surrounding the agency’s oversight of state DOT cost estimates for projects that receive federal funding.

**7/6/17** – FRA [published](#) a final rule implementing a pilot program for competitive selection of eligible petitioners in lieu of Amtrak to operate not more than three long-distance routes operated by Amtrak. The pilot program is required under the 2015 FAST Act, and specifically allows third-party operators to run up to three long-distance routes for four-year periods if they can do so at a lower cost than what it costs the federal government to operate Amtrak.

**7/5/17** – DOT [announced](#) a \$537.1 million Transportation Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (TIFIA) loan for the construction of the Moynihan Train Hall Redevelopment Project. The loan will help transform the James A. Farley Post Office Building to include a “modern, state-of-the-art train station,” relieving congestion at NYC’s Penn Station.

**7/5/17** – The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) [released](#) the Supplemental FY 2017 Apportionment Notice and tables, making available over \$12 billion in formula and discretionary funds for public transportation.

## NCSL Resources

Registration is open for [NCSL’s 2017 Legislative Summit](#) taking place in Boston, Aug. 6-9.