



Top Stories

9/17/17 – Secretary of Energy Rick Perry [stated](#) that massive storms that battered the Gulf Coast in recent weeks show the need for the Strategic Petroleum Reserve (SPR), in contrast to the president's Fiscal Year 2018 budget proposal calling for the sale of half the SPR to raise funds. The statement came weeks after Perry [authorized](#) the release of 1 million barrels of oil from the Strategic Petroleum Reserve to ease pressure on refineries hit by Hurricane Harvey. The release was set up as an oil exchange, so refineries receiving the oil must contribute back to the reserve with more oil than received.

9/12/17 – The National Highway and Transportation Safety Administration (NHTSA) released new federal guidance for Automated Driving Systems (ADS), [A Vision for Safety 2.0](#), the latest guidance for automated driving systems to industry and the states. For more information read [NCSL's Info Alert](#). Additionally, on Sept. 6, the House of Representatives passed, on voice vote, the [SELF Drive Act](#) that aims to make several changes to federal law affecting autonomous vehicles. For more information on the Act read [NCSL's Info Alert](#).

9/8/17 – The president signed a three-month continuing resolution, to continue funding the government through Dec. 8, into law ([H.R. 601](#)). In addition, the bill included \$15 billion in aid funding for those impacted by Hurricane Harvey, and an increase in the national debt limit through Dec. 8, as well as an authorization for the National Flood Insurance Program through the same date. A provision was included in the bill to allow the U.S. Forest Service and the U.S. Department of Interior (DOI) to retroactively cover the cost of wildfires in 2017. The package passed the Senate [80-17](#), and the House [316-90](#).

9/1/17 – The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) [announced](#) its completion of Ohio's required state safety oversight (SSO) program for rail transit operations, making it the first of 30 states that are required to have such certification by April 15, 2019. If a state fails to meet the deadline, FTA is prohibited by federal law from obligating funds to public transportation agencies within the state until certification is achieved.

8/29/17 – FHWA [announced](#) that vehicles logged an estimated 1.58 trillion miles in the U.S. the first half of 2017, a 1.6 percent increase from the first half of 2016. Vehicle miles traveled for the first half of the year have increased every year since 2011.

8/29/17 – DOT [released](#) \$25 million in emergency funding through the Federal Highway Administration's (FHWA) Emergency Relief program to assist Texas with repairs on flood-damaged roads and bridges following Hurricane Harvey. Additionally, the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) [relaxed](#) driver hours-of-service rules in 26 states and the District of Columbia in response to fuel shortages because of Harvey.

From the Administration

9/26/17 – The Department of Transportation (DOT) [announced](#) that it will allow a rule requiring state and regional highway planners that receive federal funding to report anticipated greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from vehicles on their roads, to go into effect. The action follows a lawsuit concerning administration action indefinitely delaying the rule. However, the administration anticipates the rule will be formally repealed.

9/22/17 – DOT [gave](#) Norwegian UK final permission to fly to the U.S. The action was opposed by a few major U.S. airlines.

9/23/17 – The Bureau of Transportation Statistics [released](#) data showing that railcars used to transport crude oil are being updated at a noticeable pace. Specifically, DOT-117 tanker cars with thicker, more protective shells, comprised 0 percent of the fleet in 2013, and now make up roughly 9 percent.

9/19/17 – FHWA [awarded](#) Oregon \$1 million in “quick release” Emergency Release funds to help begin repairs on roads and bridges damaged by wildfires.

9/14/17 – The White House Council on Environmental Quality published a [notice](#) in the Federal Register announcing a list of actions it will take to enhance and modernize the federal environmental review and authorization process for infrastructure projects including: developing a framework for implementing “one federal decision;” coordinating with various agencies in regard to high priority projects; issuing guidance to simplify and accelerate the national environmental policy act (NEPA) process; and lead an interagency working group to identify impediments to the processing of environmental review and permitting decisions. This list was developed by the Council pursuant to Executive Order 13807, [“Establishing Discipline and Accountability in the Environmental Review and Permitting Process for Infrastructure Projects.”](#)

9/6/17 – DOT [announced](#) that it is taking applications through Oct. 16 for \$500 million in infrastructure project grants through the 2017 [Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery](#) (TIGER) program. Under Fiscal Year 2017 appropriations, TIGER grants will be at least \$5 million and not more than \$25 million, except for rural areas where the minimum is \$1 million. No more than \$50 million can go to a single state.

9/5/17 – The Federal Aviation Administration’s (FAA) Part 23 [rule](#), which sets new airworthiness standards for small aircraft certification standards, came into force Aug. 30. The rule allows manufacturers to use performance-based standards in place of “prescriptive” requirements.

8/30/17 – EPA issued a [waiver](#) to 12 states and the District of Columbia allowing the sale of gasoline with 15 percent ethanol due to Hurricane Harvey’s impact on refinery closures and the disruption of the Colonial Pipeline.

8/29/17 – FTA [announced](#) the appointment of Jane Williams as the agency’s deputy administrator. Williams was most recently the director of Maryland’s DOT Washington Area Transit Office.