



Top Stories

1/24/18 – The National Highway Transportation Safety Administration (NHTSA) [created](#) a homepage for the voluntary safety self-assessments (VSSA) it received from companies testing autonomous vehicles. The page also includes a template for use. Only two companies, Waymo and General Motors, have thus far submitted a VSSA.

1/24/18 – NHTSA [issued](#) a final rule that makes changes to state highway safety grant program procedures. Programs affected by the rule include grants incentivizing alcohol-ignition interlock laws, distracted driving laws, and graduated driver licensing, all of which added flexibility for states to qualify. New grant programs were also established for sobriety programs and nonmotorized safety.

1/22/18 – A purported version of the administration's [infrastructure plan](#) was leaked by multiple media companies, although the White House neither confirmed nor denied the document's authenticity. The plan contains four "pots" of potential funding and the percentage of total funding that each pot would account for, although the plan did not include an overall dollar amount of funding. Additionally, the document gave no indication as to the source of funding. Later in the week, White House Infrastructure Advisor, DJ Gribbin, [indicated](#) the administration was not seeking new revenue for its forthcoming plan and would instead propose a series of spending cuts to existing domestic discretionary spending, including reductions in funding for Amtrak and other transit grant programs. Within the leaked draft plan, the largest pot of funding, infrastructure incentives, would receive 50 percent of funding and be structured as a competitive grant that would provide funding for projects that also brought in, new non-federal revenues. Federal funds from this pot would only be

able to represent a maximum of 20 percent of the project's cost, a significant reduction from existing programs. Additionally, proposed projects would receive credit for non-federal revenues created within the past three years, but not beyond. Such funds could fund many transportation infrastructure projects but not energy-related or broadband projects. Moreover, no specific agency is named as the lead federal agency. The second pot, transformative projects, would receive 10 percent of overall funding. It would also be a competitive grant program, but run solely by the Department of Commerce and would be aimed at higher risk projects. The third pot, rural infrastructure, would receive 25 percent of funds and be given to states as grants based on the percentage of rural population and rural highway lane miles in their state. States would be free to use these funds on numerous types of projects including transportation, energy, broadband and water. The final pot, federal credit and financing, would provide a little over 12 percent to expand existing federal financing programs. Finally, the plan would remove the annual cap on private activity bonds (PABs), along with other changes to PABs that would increase their value. There are additional provisions in the document that would give new flexibilities to states to raise new transportation revenues, including authority to toll existing interstates and commercialize rest areas. It remains very unclear if this is the final version that the administration will formally submit as well as whether Congress will go along, propose their own plan, or do nothing.

1/17/18 – The National Academies of Science, Medicine and Engineering issued a [report](#) on driving under the influence (DUI) of alcohol, which included a recommendation that all states lower their DUI laws to take effect at a BAC of .05 instead of the current .08.

1/10/17 – U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) Secretary Elaine Chao [announced](#) four requests for information regarding automated vehicle technologies as DOT works to develop a third iteration of driverless car guidelines for release in summer 2018. NHTSA is soliciting input on "any regulatory barriers" to automated technology testing and certification for vehicles, specifically those designed without controls—like a steering wheel or brake pedal—intended for a human driver. The Federal Highways Administration (FHWA) is seeking information on how to integrate automated driving technologies into the existing U.S. highway system, such as which roadway features are significant for automated systems to perform safely and whether state of good repair affects that ability. The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) is asking for more information on existing automated transit bus technologies and on potential areas for future research. The agency is also seeking comment on any regulatory or policy impediments to developing and deploying buses for automation levels 3 through 5.

12/22/17 – Following the deadly Amtrak crash in Washington state, the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) [released](#) an updated infographic detailing the implementation status of Positive Train Control (PTC) installation across all major railroad operators. The data shows a wide range in how far along operators are to completing installation. The current deadline for PTC operation is Dec. 31, 2018 although extensions can be authorized on a case-by-case basis.

From Congress

1/25/18 – The Senate confirmed [R.D. James, 89-1](#), to be the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works, leading the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. James most recently served as a civilian member and engineer on the Mississippi River Commission, and is a self-employed farmer and manager of cotton gins and grain elevators in Missouri.

1/17/18 – The House Rules Committee held a [hearing](#) to examine the possibility of reinstituting the earmark process in congressional legislation. Many members of Congress and the administration have been supportive of such actions, however a

bipartisan group of 10 senators released [legislation](#) supporting a permanent ban.

From the Administration

1/18/18 – DOT [announced](#) two pilot programs to help modernize data analysis by combining its "traditional datasets" with information crowdsourced from apps and other devices. One pilot program would use data from the Waze app on traffic crashes to determine the feasibility of relying on its crowdsourcing for timely information on road conditions. The second would incorporate data from GPS devices recording prevailing speeds on highways with information on highway design and known accidents to help the department examine how speed and road structure affect the probability of crashes, especially in rural areas.

1/10/18 – Federal Trade Commission's staff published "takeaways" from a June 2017 workshop co-hosted with NHTSA, noting that cybersecurity has become a [fact of life](#). "Attackers have become more sophisticated. After a group of attackers has done the work to identify an attack vector, they may share that attack publicly, simplifying follow-up attacks." The commission noted several suggestions from workshop participants for how to reduce cyber risks, from information sharing to isolating important functions within the vehicle to developing security best practices.

1/3/18 – The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) [assessed](#) \$41,150 in civil penalties against six commuter and small freight railroads in 2016 for failing to adhere to positive train control (PTC) installation deadlines the railroads outlined in plans submitted to the federal government.