



Top Stories

3/23/18 – Congress enacted, and the president signed the [Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2018](#), more commonly referred to as the FY 2018 omnibus. The bill provides FY 2018 funding levels for all federal agencies. For more information on funding levels for transportation programs, read [NCSL's Info Alert](#).

3/20/18 – The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) [posted](#) fourth-quarter 2017 data on railroads' progress toward implementing [positive train control](#) (PTC), showing that freights are still significantly further along than their passenger rail counterparts. Fifty-six percent of freight-owned route miles were PTC-operable by the end of 2017, compared to just 24 percent (the same as in the third quarter of that year) on the passenger side. Fifteen of the 41 railroads subject to the mandate reported having all necessary PTC hardware installed; another 12 are at least 75 percent done.

3/15/18 – The Department of Homeland Security [announced](#) that Russian government cyber actors "since at least March 2016" had "targeted multiple U.S. critical infrastructure sectors, including the energy, nuclear, commercial facilities, water, aviation, and critical manufacturing sectors."

3/13/18 – The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration [granted](#) a limited 90-day waiver from the federal hours of service regulations pertaining to electronic logging devices. This waiver was further extended until Sept. 30, 2018 as part of the [Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2018](#).

3/6/18 – The Department of Transportation (DOT) [announced](#) a list of 41 recipients of nearly \$500 million in FY 2017 discretionary grant funding for road, transit, maritime and rail

projects through the [Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery \(TIGER\) program](#). TIGER grants range from \$5 million to \$25 million, except for projects in rural areas where the minimum is \$1 million, and no state could receive more than \$50 million in total. Project sponsors are required to obligate the TIGER funds by Sept. 30, 2020. A total of \$195 million (40 percent of total funding) was awarded to state government agencies for specific projects. More than 64 percent of this round of TIGER funding was awarded to rural projects, the largest percentage in the program's history. Projects classified as "mass transit," received four percent of funding. The TIGER program is slated to receive \$1.5 billion in FY 2018, triple its FY 2017 award.

3/6/18 – DOT Secretary Elaine Chao stated during a [hearing](#) in front of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee that the department expects to award \$1.56 billion in 2017 and 2018 [Infrastructure for Rebuilding America \(INFRA\) grants](#) by the beginning of June. The INFRA program is a discretionary grant program formed in 2017 that slightly restructured a previously existing program established by the 2015 FAST Act to award funds to projects of national and regional significance. INFRA places a greater emphasis of project awards to those projects that are supported by additional non-federal revenue.

3/6/18 – At a National Association of Counties [event](#), Representative Sam Graves (R-Mo.), chair of the House Highways and Transit subcommittee, commented that he didn't believe the House of Representatives would be able to pass a gas tax increase in 2018. He called the levy "regressive," and said he doesn't "particularly like tolling" but that a vehicle-miles-traveled tax is his "favorite" option.

3/6/18 – Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) acting Administrator Dan Elwell [announced](#) that the agency is expanding tests of an automated system for flight approvals called [Low Altitude Authorization and Notification Capability \(LAANC\)](#). The FAA will conduct a nationwide beta test beginning April 30 to deploy LAANC incrementally at nearly 300 air traffic facilities, covering approximately 500 airports, to allow drone operators to receive near real-time airspace authorizations, according to the agency. LAANC is key to the development of an unmanned traffic management system to integrate drones into controlled airspace.

3/5/18 – DOT [released](#) a 61-page report on the president's infrastructure initiative, which includes an overview of the "infrastructure problem" in the U.S. The details of the plan remain the same as those [released](#) in February. For more information, please read [NCSL's Info Alert](#). It remains unclear if Congress will pass legislation by the end of the year that resembles the president's plan.

2/26/18 – The White House Office of Management and Budget [released](#) its annual report on the costs and benefits of federal regulations showing that the benefits of benefits of major rules from the previous administration exceed the annual costs of the rules. The report found the annual benefits of major federal regulations from 2006 to 2016 were between \$219 and \$695 billion, while the annual costs were between \$59 billion and \$88 billion. The report is congressionally mandated and looks at the cumulative costs and benefits of major rules, or rules that have an annual effect on the economy of \$100 million or more, over the last decade. For example, annual benefits of rules via DOT's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) were between \$14.8 and \$26.9 billion, and only cost between roughly \$5 and \$10 million.

From the Administration

3/22/18 – The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) [announced](#) it has certified rail transit [state safety oversight \(SSO\) programs](#) for Massachusetts and Hawaii, narrowing the list of states that must complete that process ahead of a 2019 deadline. Federal law requires states with rail transit systems in the engineering

or construction phase of development or in operation to obtain FTA certification of their SSO Programs by April 15, 2019

3/19/18 – FTA [announced](#) the [Low or No Emission Grants Program](#) projects for FY 2017. Fifty-one projects were selected, awarding \$55 million to state and local governments for the purchase or lease of zero-emission and low-emission transit buses as well as acquisition, construction and leasing of required supporting facilities, as authorized by the [Fixing America's Surface Transportation \(FAST\) Act](#).

3/16/18 – FAA [released](#) an aerospace forecast estimating that U.S. airline passenger volume would grow to 1.28 billion people by 2038, which is about 400 million more than the number of air travelers in 2017. FAA also expects to see more than 451,000 small, commercial drones in the sky by 2022 and for the number of hobbyist drones to have doubled to 2.4 million.

3/7/18 – NHTSA [unveiled](#) an interactive portal for the public to access data derived from the agency's annual traffic safety report. Users can download information from a variety of ways, from state-level views to the types of vehicles involved in crashes.

2/28/18 – FRA [published](#) a report on the use of unmanned aircraft systems (drones at railroads around the world).

Other

2/28/18 – The Governors Highway Safety Association [estimated](#) that pedestrian fatalities were nearly level in 2017, compared to 2016, at around 6,000. Pedestrian fatalities represent a little more than 15 percent of all traffic related fatalities.