



## Top Stories

**2/22/2016** – The U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) [reported](#) that Americans set a record of 107 billion vehicle miles traveled in 2015, increasing 3.5 percent over 2014. According to DOT, the low price of gasoline as well as the economic recovery from the Great Recession were likely contributing factors in the increase.

**2/9/2016** – President Obama [released](#) his FY 2017 Budget proposal which included provisions to establish the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Clean Transportation Plan—\$303 billion in new infrastructure investments over 10 years, funded from both a fee of \$10.25 per barrel on oil, along with “one-time revenues from pro-growth business tax

reform.” Additionally, the budget proposed \$4 billion over 10 years, including \$200 million in FY 2017, to advance autonomous and self-driving vehicle technology through large scale pilots to ensure multistate interoperability. The president also proposed to reduce the current direct role of states in determining federal transportation funding allocations by “directing billions of dollars through regional governments such as Metropolitan Planning Organizations, empowering them to play a stronger role in decision-making.” However, it is highly unlikely that many, if any, of the president’s proposals will be included in the final FY 2017 budget.

**1/27/2016** - The Congressional Budget Office [estimated](#) that



the Highway Trust Fund would become insolvent sometime in 2021, as well as require at least \$108 billion in additional revenues to sustain another long-term funding bill following the expiration of the FAST Act in September 2020.

## From the 114<sup>th</sup> Congress

**2/11/2016** - The U.S. House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee approved, 32-26, the Aviation Innovation, Reform and Reauthorization (AIRR) Act that reauthorizes the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) for six years through (FY 2022. NCSL sent a [letter](#) to Transportation and Infrastructure Committee Chairman Bill Shuster (R-Pa.) and Ranking Member Peter DeFazio (D-Ore.) regarding our concerns with the bill. The bill’s fate is unclear as there appears to be concerns from members of both parties in both chambers with the bill’s air traffic control privatization provisions.

## From the Department of Transportation (DOT)

**2/2/4/2016** – The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) [announced](#) it is establishing an Aviation Rulemaking Committee, which will begin work in March, to develop recommendations on “micro drones;” those that weigh less than 4.4 pounds. The ARC will develop performance-based standards for the classification and operation of micro drones over people —unlike the small commercial drone rule that is still pending, which generally prohibits operations over people.

Additionally, in a separate [Q&A](#), the FAA notes that micro drones will likely no longer be contemplated as part of the pending final rule for small commercial drones operations.

**2/23/2016** - DOT [announced](#) it will make \$500 million in Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) grants available to state and local governments in 2016, the same level provided in 2015, with grant applications due April 29. TIGER grants fund capital investments in surface transportation infrastructure and are awarded on a competitive basis for projects that will have a significant impact on the nation, a metropolitan area, or a region.

**2/18/2016** – The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) [published](#) supplementary highway apportionment tables for FY 2016, which includes detailed funding breakdowns for major highway programs including set-asides and suballocations.

**2/18/2016** - The Federal Railroad Administration [distributed](#) about \$10 million in grants to state departments of transportation to improve rail track crossing safety on routes used by trains hauling crude oil and ethanol.

**2/10/2016** – The Federal Transit Administration [recommended](#) 31 transit projects to share \$3.5 billion in capital investment grants for rail, bus and streetcar initiatives in 18 states. Although Congress ultimately decides on which projects receive funding, DOT's recommendations are influential in impacting any final funding decisions.

**2/5/2016** – The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) [announced](#) its latest estimate of traffic deaths for 2015, which show a 9.3 percent increase for the first nine months. Specifically, NHTSA estimates that more than 26,000 people died in traffic crashes, compared to the 23,796 fatalities in the first nine months of 2014.

**2/5/2016** – FTA issued a [proposed rule](#) for the Public Transportation Agency Safety Plan (Agency Safety Plan) that would require those receiving federal aid to utilize Safety Management Systems and a [notice of availability](#) for the proposed National Public Transportation Safety Plan (National Safety Plan.) Both the Agency Safety Plan proposed rule and

the proposed National Safety Plan are statutory requirements reauthorized in the Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act in 2015.

2/4/2016 – Reuters [reported](#) that NHTSA informed Google that it will interpret the “driver” of Google's self-driving car unit as referring to the self-driving system and not to any of vehicle occupants. For additional information on state actions on autonomous vehicles, please see [NCSL's website](#).

**1/27/2016** - FTA launched a new [website](#) featuring information about the FAST Act, including a [summary](#) of the legislation. FTA also announced changes to programs required by the FAST Act as well as published preliminary implementation instructions and guidance, along with [2016 Apportionment Tables](#), which display the funds available to eligible states and urbanized areas.

## Other News Items

**2/23/2016** – Following an NTSB [recommendation](#) to regulate bulk shipments of lithium-ion batteries on planes, the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) [issued](#) a new interim safety measure, prohibiting all shipments of lithium-ion batteries as cargo on passenger aircraft.

**2/9/2016** – Amtrak CEO [requested](#) 3.8 percent reductions to its FY 2016 budget due to falling revenues, which he blamed on low ridership in part due to the low price of gasoline.

## NCSL Resources

NCSL's 2015 Capitol Forum drew hundreds of legislators and legislative staff to Washington, D.C., for committee meetings, issue sessions and visits to Capitol Hill.

[See presentations and other material from the meeting on our NCSL Capitol Forum resources page.](#)