



Top Stories

4/19/2016— The Senate passed (95-3) a 17-month reauthorization of the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA). The bill also includes a number of provisions related to airport security in the wake of the terror attacks in Brussels, as well as language pertaining to increasing the safety of unmanned aerial vehicles (drones). Unfortunately, the final version of the bill included a short section (2152) preempting states and localities from enforcing or enacting any laws pertaining to drones.

NCSL will continue to work with both chambers to remove this language before a final FAA reauthorization is signed into law. For a complete summary of the Senate FAA reauthorization click [here](#). In the House, there remains uncertainty for when the chamber will take up the reauthorization bill that was [approved](#) by the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee earlier this year. Current authorization for the FAA expires in mid-July.

4/13/2016—The U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA) forecast in its Short-Term Energy and Summer Fuels Outlook that the average retail price of a gallon of gasoline will be \$2.04 this summer, [the lowest since 2004](#) and 59 cents lower than last summer.

4/6/2016—The Micro Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS) Aviation Rulemaking Committee [released](#) its report and recommendations of performance-based regulations that would

allow certain types of unmanned aircraft to operate over people not directly involved in the flight of the aircraft. The report recommends establishing four small UAS categories, defined primarily by risk of injury to people below the flight path. For each category, the group recommends assigning a potential risk linked to either weight or impact energy. The report also addresses operational restrictions and standards to minimize the associated risks, including a minimum operating distances from crowds of at least 20 feet above people on the ground, along with takeoff and landings being at least 10 feet away from bystanders.



From the 114th Congress

4/27/2016—The Senate Environment and Public Works Committee [approved](#) S. 2848, the Water Resources Development Act of 2016. The bill authorizes \$9 billion for 25 U.S. Army

Corps of Engineers projects in 17 states designed to improve ocean and river ports, barge traffic and flood control. Additionally, the bill includes funding for drinking water and waste water infrastructure in response to the emergency drinking water contamination facing Flint, Mich., and other similar communities across the country. The bill now moves to the full Senate for consideration; a companion bill in the House has not been released.

4/21/2016—The Senate Appropriations Committee approved the [FY 2017 Transportation](#) spending bill. The bill includes \$77.9 billion for programs under the Department of Transportation (DOT) with funding levels matching those

authorized in last year's five-year surface transportation reauthorization, Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act. Within this total, \$12.3 billion is for transit programs, \$575 above the enacted level in FY 2016. The bill also includes an increase in the TIGER grant program to \$525 million from \$500 million, while also increasing the level of program funding that must be set aside for rural projects to 30 percent from its current level of 20 percent, and reducing the share of funding that can go to any single state from 20 percent from 10 percent. The bill is expected to be voted on by the full Senate this month.

From the Administration

4/18/2016—The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) [released a proposed rulemaking](#) outlining new performance measures that would require states to assess how planned projects would contribute to carbon emissions, although the rule would not force decisions based on such assessments. Several cities and states, including California, Oregon, and Massachusetts already take such calculations into account. The proposed rule is a requirement of MAP-21, the surface transportation law approved in 2012.

4/14/2016—FAA unveiled an electronic registration system for owners of unmanned aircraft systems (UAS) used for commercial, public and other non-model aircraft uses. All owners of small UAS used for purposes other than as model aircraft must still obtain a Section 333 exemption grant, a certificate of waiver or authorization, or other FAA authorization to operate legally in U.S. airspace. Registration is one of the requirements associated with a Section 333 exemption. Previously, these UAS owners had to fill out paper aircraft registration forms and physically mail them to the FAA Registry in Oklahoma City. The process often took weeks to accomplish because of the volume of requests. Additionally, the FAA has raised the ceiling for commercial drone flights allowed under section 333 exemptions from 200 feet to 400 feet.

4/14/2016—The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) awarded \$59 million in grants for 18 passenger ferry projects in 10 states. The funds will support existing ferry service on many of

the nation's waterways, and help to repair and modernize ferry boats, terminals, and related facilities. Additionally, on April 19, FTA [announced](#) that seven projects in five states will receive \$22.5 million in competitive grants for the Low and No-Emission Vehicle Deployment Program, which provides funds for transit buses and related facilities that utilize technologies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

4/14/2016—The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) [announced](#) that an internal review would lead to changes in its bridge safety program. Specifically, the agency is finalizing new instructions for bridge specialists which comes two months after the DOT Inspector General issued a report critical of the FRA's work on the transportation of hazardous materials.

4/4/2016—FTA [announced](#) the selection of nine cities, including Honolulu, Oklahoma City and Richmond, Va., to receive technical assistance to encourage economic development around local transit service as part of the FTA's nationwide transit-oriented development (TOD) initiative.

3/25/2016—FHWA Administrator Gregory Nadeau [issued a memorandum](#) highlighting that the FAST Act directs the agency to encourage vegetation management and plantings in transportation rights-of-way to support the pollinators, and that efforts by states could be eligible for federal funding if they are related to a transportation project.

NCSL Resources

Registration is open for [NCSL's 2016 Legislative Summit](#) taking place in Chicago, Aug. 8-11. Register before May 23 to receive the early bird rate.

The NRI Committee is pleased to present its [2016 Spring Webinar Series](#) with topics ranging from rural broadband to water infrastructure to GMO labeling. Webinars will be occurring every other Thursday from April 14-June 23. Check our [website](#) for more information and to register.