



Top Stories

7/7/16 – The Association of American Railroads [released](#) a statement earlier this month stating that U.S. railroad's combined carload and intermodal traffic fell 6.3 percent in June 2016 when compared with June 2015.

6/21/16 – The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) [released](#) final rules regarding small unmanned aircraft systems (UAS, or drones) for commercial operations. The rule mandates that the drone must not only remain within eyesight of the operator, but that it cannot fly in the evening, it can only fly to a maximum height of 400 feet and that it can operate at a maximum speed of 100 miles per hour. The FAA, at this time, does not believe specific text addressing pre-emption is required in the final rule—pre-emption issues involving small UAS will require a case-by-case analysis. For additional information see [NCSL's News Alert](#).



6/3/16 – Vehicle miles traveled on U.S. roads [reached](#) a record-setting volume for the first quarter this year, increasing by 4.2 percent from 2015. Vehicles traveled 746 billion miles in January-March, according to the FHWA.

5/27/16 – The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) jointly [issued](#) a rule updating regulations governing both metropolitan transportation plans and long-range, statewide transportation plans. The new

rule makes the updates to reflect changes made as a result of the passage of the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century and the Fixing America's Surface Transportation Acts (FAST Act). Specifically, the rule will require state departments of transportation to implement a performance-based approach to planning and programming with a new emphasis on the non-metropolitan transportation planning process, among other regulations.

5/25/16 – The House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee [approved](#) the Water Resources Development Act of 2016, a \$5 billion dollar water resources authorization bill. The bill would authorize 28 Army Corps of Engineers projects, and reroute all funds generated by user fees at harbors back into the Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund by 2027, an issue [advocated](#) for by NCSL.

4/29/16 – The U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit [struck down](#) provisions of a 2008 law that gave Amtrak trains priority over freight trains in *Association of American Railroads v. U.S. Department of Transportation*. The 2008 law came amid concerns about Amtrak's service reliability and delays from traffic congestion. The court ruled that the law gave Amtrak, which runs as a for-profit entity but is ruled as a government agency, too much power over its competitors and that the law unconstitutionally gives power to an arbitrator who is not appointed by the president.

From the 114th Congress

5/19/16 – The Senate [approved](#) the FY 2017 Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act. The bill includes \$44 billion for the Highway Trust Fund (consistent with the surface transportation authorization bill, the FAST Act), \$525 million for TIGER grants (a \$25 million increase), \$17 billion in discretionary spending for the DOT. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) also would receive \$891 million, including additional funding for autonomous vehicle research.

From the Administration

7/7/16 – The Department of Transportation (DOT) [awarded](#) eight U.S. airlines flights routes from 10 U.S. cities to Havana.

7/6/16 – FTA [launched](#) TODresources.org, an online hub to aid communities develop outstanding transit-oriented development (TOD) projects as part of the TOD Technical Assistance Initiative. This, initiative, [announced](#) in December 2015, aims to assist communities across the nation in advance transit-oriented development projects.

7/5/16 –FTA [announced](#) an additional allocation of \$835 million in emergency relief funds to transit authorities in New York and New Jersey in response to Hurricane Sandy, which hit the area in 2012. These funds bring the total amount of relief funding to \$10 billion.

7/1/16 – The Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA) [announced](#) more than \$49 million in Pipeline Safety Base Grants to reimburse a portion of the operating fees for state pipeline safety programs.

6/30/16 –FHWA [published](#) advance state highway apportionment amounts for FY 2017 providing long sought after certainty that states had requested for federal surface transportation funding.

6/27/16 – FTA and FHWA [released](#) proposed rules to foster more effective regional planning by states and metropolitan

planning organizations (MPOs) by requiring unified plans for urban areas, even if multiple MPOs exist within that area.

6/24/16 – The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) [cited](#) Union Pacific Railroad’s “failure to maintain its track and track equipment” as the cause for the derailment of a train carrying 94 tank cars with Bakken crude oil near Mosier ,Ore., in June.

6/7/16 – The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) [finalized](#) a rule that requires occupants in commercial vehicles to wear a seat belt while driving on public roads. FMCSA rules currently require commercial vehicles to have seat belt assemblies at every seating position. The new rule, however, holds the motor carrier and driver responsible for passengers not wearing seat belts.

5/31/16 A new FHWA rule would [allow](#) state departments of transportation to bypass detailed environmental reviews on project maintenance or upgrade activities by expanding the options for projects to fall under the categorical exclusions list giving states more flexibility to complete projects fast and at lowest cost.

5/23/16 – NHTSA [published](#) an interim rule for revised uniform procedures for implementing state highway safety grant programs. The rule would reorganize, streamline and update grant requirements.

5/4/16 – FAA [released](#) a memo designating schoolwork with unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), better known as drones, as a hobby or recreation. The memo exempts high school and college students from more stringent regulations on commercial drone activity. The policy, however, prohibits teachers from flying drones, except in case of emergency. Additionally, it prohibits journalists from flying drones without a license and special exemption.

4/29/16 – FTA, FHWA and the FRA [issued](#) joint guidance documents on the FAST Act’s provisions on streamlining the environmental review process and how it applies to parks, refuges and historic sites.

4/27/16 – FMCSA [released](#) an advance notice of a proposed rule that would require states to establish a program for annual inspections of passenger-carrying commercial motor vehicles. FMCSA will review the effectiveness of existing Federal inspection standards and consider the costs and benefits of imposing an inspection program on the states.

4/14/16 – FTA [awarded](#) \$60 million in FY 2016 Passenger Ferry grants to states across the country, including California, Florida, Massachusetts and Washington. The grant program awards funding to 16 projects to help purchase, replace and/or rehabilitate passenger ferries. Read the full list of projects awarded [here](#).

Other News

6/21/16 – The Government Accountability Office [urged](#) the DOT to provide assistance to small and rural public transit systems to help them acquire technology, finding that less populated and more rural communities weren't using intelligent transit systems technologies, "due to the cost of the technologies or because there is no perceived need."

5/10/16 – The American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) [released](#) a report that the U.S. will fall \$1.4 trillion short on infrastructure spending by 2025. According to the report, unaddressed infrastructure deficiencies will cause households to lose \$3,400 in disposable income each year until 2025 and the economy to lose almost \$4 trillion in GDP. Most transportation areas have improved since ASCE's previous report; however, the most recent report says that surface transportation has worsened.

NCSL Resources

Registration is open for [NCSL's 2016 Legislative Summit](#) taking place in Chicago, Aug. 8-11.