



Top Stories

5/23/17—President Donald Trump [released](#) his FY 2018 budget proposal which recommends reducing nondefense discretionary funding by \$54 billion, while providing a similar increase to the Department of Defense. The budget proposes to reduce discretionary funding for the Department of Transportation (DOT) from \$19.3 billion in FY 2017 to \$16.2 billion for FY 2018. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' (USACE) discretionary funding is proposed to be reduced to \$5 billion in FY 2018, from \$6 billion in FY 2017. The Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) discretionary budget saw a significant reduction from \$8.2 billion in FY 2017 to \$5.7 billion in FY 2018. The Department of Energy (DOE) also saw a reduction from \$31.18 billion in FY 2017 to \$28 billion in FY 2018. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) was proposed to be reduced to \$137 billion in FY 2018, from \$153.4 billion in FY 2017, and the Department of Interior (DOI) is also proposed to be reduced to \$11.7 billion for FY 2018, 11 percent less than FY 2017. For more information on the president's budget, see NCSL's [Info Alert](#).

5/17/17—Representative Mike Simpson (R-Idaho), Chairman of the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Energy and Water, [commented](#) on the FY 2018 budget, noting that the “best thing [Congress] might be able to do for the agencies and their funding is actually to do a CR for the full year.”

5/17/17—In a Senate Environmental and Public Works Subcommittee [hearing](#), Transportation Secretary Chao gave remarks on the administration's forthcoming infrastructure package, stating that the administration plans to “share its vision” of infrastructure principles in the coming weeks, with Congress expected to unveil legislation soon after. The Secretary also noted that potential federal funding to states and

localities would be directed at projects that have already secured some form of financing. She added a caveat that “a few special projects” that were not able to access private sector funding “will likely be identified and funded directly” and that the administration is “committed to an infrastructure package that addresses the needs of the entire country, urban and rural.”

5/2/17—In remarks at the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, Chairman and CEO of Dow Chemical Andrew Liveris, who heads the president's [Manufacturing Jobs Initiative council](#) [announced](#) that the council is looking at “over 130 regulations,” from across the federal government for possible reform or elimination.

5/1/17—At a Milken Institute Conference, Treasury Secretary Steven Munchin [announced](#) that the president was unlikely to couple tax reform with infrastructure spending, as “they're both complicated issues.”

5/1/17— A final report [prepared](#) for the Federal Aviation Administration's (FAA) Unmanned Aerial Systems (UAS) Center for Excellence found that if a drone weighing under 3 pounds were to fall onto a person, there would only be between an 11 percent to 13 percent chance of causing a significant neck injury. However, protections from rotating blades could be necessary. Research did not address when blade guards would be needed, what the fire hazards are of a battery falling 400 feet, and how additional cargo would affect the severity of an impact.

From Congress

5/17/17—The Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee approved five bills that would alter how agencies issue regulations—the "[Regulatory Accountability Act](#)," "[Regulations from the Executive in Need of Scrutiny \(REINS\) Act](#)," the "[Midnight Rules Relief Act](#)," the "[Small Business Regulatory Flexibility Improvements Act](#)" and the "[Early Participation in Regulations Act](#)."

5/12/17—The president signed [S.496](#) into public law to repeal the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Federal Transit Administration's (FTA) "[Metropolitan Planning Organization Coordination and Planning Area Reform](#)" rule. The rule would have required metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs) in the same region to merge.

5/10/17—Senate Commerce Committee Chairman John Thune (R-S.D.) said that lawmakers may not be able to fit infrastructure in this year, "from a scheduling standpoint," as they still have the "budget to do, tax reform, and finish healthcare first." The "administration is saying they want to do infrastructure outside of tax reform," and Thune believes it "could be something that gets pushed."

4/26/17—The [Regulatory Accountability Act](#) was introduced in the Senate with bipartisan support. It would amend the 1946 Administrative Procedure Act by requiring federal agencies to conduct cost-benefit analyses. The bill would also trigger an automatic review process for major regulations, allow hearings on significant federal actions, and require agencies to inform the public in advance before they start work on a new rule. Its companion, [H.R.5](#), was previously passed 238-183, although the language differs substantially from the Senate version.

4/26/17—Chairman Susan Collins, and Ranking Member Jack Reed of the Senate's Appropriations Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and related agencies wrote a [letter](#) to the GAO requesting a study of automated vehicles and the future impacts on the nation's economy and workforce.

From the Administration

5/25/17—The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) [expects](#) some commuter railroads to miss the Dec. 31, 2018 deadline to implement enough positive train control (PTC) requirements to be eligible for an additional grace period to comply with the original mandate. PTC is an advanced system designed to automatically stop a train before certain accidents occur, including train-to-train collisions, derailments caused by excessive speed, and train movements through misaligned track switches.

5/22/17—FTA announced it will [approve](#) a \$647 million grant for the electrification of Caltrain tracks in the Bay Area. The deadline for federal approval was June 30 and without it the project would not have been able to move forward. FTA cautioned that part of the multiyear grant was contingent on congressional appropriations.

5/18/17—FHWA [announced](#) its intent to "indefinitely" delay more than a dozen sections of a regulation laying out new performance metrics. According to the notice published in the Federal Register, provisions related to measuring carbon dioxide emissions from on-road mobile sources would "benefit from further notice and comment period," in order to give the president's appointees and designees "adequate time to review them." The overall final rule was intended to take effect Feb. 17, but was delayed due to the administration's [regulatory freeze](#).

5/9/17—GAO [published](#) a report on ongoing Job Access and Reverse Commute (JARC) activities which focused on how states and transit providers have continued to fund such activities following the program's repeal and consolidation into the existing Urbanized Area Formula Program, and the Formula Grants for Rural Areas Program in 2012. Thirty of the 34 recipients interviewed said they have continued to provide some level of JARC activities after the statutory changes.

4/28/17—FTA [announced](#) the opportunity to apply for up to \$55 million in competitive grant funds through FTA's Low or No Emission (Low-No) Bus Program which supports projects sponsored by local transit agencies to bring advanced, American-made, bus technologies such as battery power and

hydrogen fuel cells into service nationwide. The application deadline is June 26, 2017.

NCSL Resources

Registration is open for [NCSL's 2017 Legislative Summit](#) taking place in Boston, Aug. 8-9.