Federal Administration Policy and Regulatory News

Government Shutdown Impacts on Transportation

Government shutdown affects different modal agencies in sharply different ways. USDOT published an update to its operating plan under shutdown. It said a funding interruption would cause it to furlough 20,518 employees out of a total of 55,180. Highway Trust Fund (HTF) operations would continue during a lapse in annual appropriations, however agencies such as Federal Transit Administration would be deeply impacted. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) activity, with the exception of grant programs funded under the HTF, will be reduced. For example, NHTSA will suspend of compliance testing and vehicle safety enforcement.

Details on Trump Administration Infrastructure Proposal are Out

Bloomberg is reporting that the Trump administration plans to steer federal dollars to projects with significant funding from states, local governments, private entities and other non-federal sources.

10% set aside for so-called "transformative" projects; other funding would be made available for capital financing and lending programs such as TIFIA and WIFIA

FCC's Floats $500M Rural Broadband Funding Plan
Federal Communications Commission Chairman Ajit Pai announced a proposal Tuesday, with few public details, that would pump more than $500 million into small rural broadband carriers and local cooperatives in order to bolster rural high-speed broadband deployment, while also imposing new anti-abuse rules. ITS America, in its policy roadmap, supports inclusion of broadband networks in any infrastructure legislation, including broadband funding for rural or otherwise hard-to-serve areas.

### Legislative News

**Trump Infrastructure Plan Expected After State of the Union**

ITS America has been told in meetings with Senate aides that President Donald Trump will submit his infrastructure plan principles rather than a legislative package after the State of the Union.

The plan calls for allocating at least $200 billion in federal funds over 10 years to spur at least $800 billion in spending by states, localities and the private sector. It remains unclear how much of the $200 billion would be for transportation (as opposed to broadband water, and other infrastructure) and the exact source of the funding. The Administration is looking at cuts in the federal budget to pay for spending on the infrastructure plan. The plan would put funding in four areas: funding for states and localities that generate their own funding; block grants for rural areas; federal lending programs; and money for transformational projects.

ITS America’s priority for the infrastructure plan is ensure that technology eligible activities under the FAST Act, including vehicle-to-infrastructure, are eligible activities and that it includes robust funding for broadband deployment. ITS America’s President and CEO Shailen Bhatt will deliver that message to the Hill in meetings this week with the Senate Committees on Environment and Public Works and Commerce, Science, and Transportation.
U.S. Chamber of Commerce Calls for a Gas Tax Increase to Pay for Infrastructure Investments

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce on January 18, 2018, called for increasing the gas tax as it unveiled a plan to rebuild America’s roads, bridges and trains. Chamber President Tom Donohue called for a 25-cent increase to the gas tax over the course of five years, but said his group would also support a proposal that increased the tax all at once. The Chamber plan proposes a five-cent increase over five years. “Increasing the fee by a total of $.25 cents, indexed for inflation and improving fuel economy, would raise $394 billion over the next 10 years,” said Donohue. The user fee was last raised in 1993. Since then, inflation and vehicle fuel economy have eroded its value. As a result, the federal highway and transit trust fund faces a shortfall of $138 billion over the next decade.

Senate Hearing on Driving Automotive Innovation and Federal Policies

The Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation, will convene a field hearing titled, “Driving Automotive Innovation and Federal Policies,” at 10:00 a.m. on Wednesday, January 24, 2018, at the Washington Convention Center. The Senate field hearing will examine self-driving and other auto technologies as well as issues on the horizon for lawmakers and regulators. Witnesses include Dr. Randy Avent, President, Florida Polytechnic University; Tim Kentley-Klay, CEO and Founder, Zoox, Inc.; Brian M. Krzanich, CEO, Intel Corporation; Mike Mansuetti, President, Robert Bosch North America, Robert Bosch LLC; and Luke Schneider, President, Audi Mobility U.S.

Senate Commerce Democratic Subcommittee Assignments Announced

U.S. Senator Bill Nelson (D-FL), the ranking member of the Senate Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee, announced on January 19, 2018, ranking member and subcommittee assignments for Democratic committee members following Senator Jon Tester’s
replacement of Senator Cory Booker on the committee. Senator Gary Peters will now become the ranking member of the Surface Transportation Subcommittee, while Senator Tammy Baldwin is set to assume that role on the Oceans, Atmosphere, Fisheries and Coast Guard Subcommittee. Read more here.

**Senate Committee Approves Carr’s Nomination for a Full Term**

The Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation approved on January 18, 2018, Brendan Carr’s nomination to the Federal Communications Commission by a 14-13 vote. Next stop is the full Senate.

**Bipartisan Group of Senators Urge President Trump to Prioritize Broadband Infrastructure**

U.S. Senators Shelley Moore Capito (R-WV), Angus King (I-ME), Amy Klobuchar (D-MN), Heidi Heitkamp (D-ND), and John Boozman (R-AR)—co-chairs of the bipartisan Senate Broadband Caucus—sent a letter on January 17, 2017, to President Trump, urging the administration to include “dedicated, stand-alone funding for broadband deployment” in any proposed infrastructure package. Read more here.

**Broadband Bills Introduced in the House**

Ten broadband bills were introduced in the House Subcommittee on Communications and Technology the week of January 15, 2018. The sponsors of the bills are looking to incorporate the bills into the infrastructure bill. The bills largely focus on speeding the deployment of broadband on federal property by streamlining environmental and historic preservation reviews, require broadband mapping, and require an inventory of federal assets on which a communications facility could be attached or installed. ITS America is concerned with a bill that would require the GAO to study the “potential avenues for, and barriers to, broadband deployment of gigabit WiFi service in spectrum bands below 6 gigahertz at a scale that allows for rapid expanded use of new consumer devices.” It is well established that connected vehicle applications have the potential to deliver broad safety and mobility benefits, for both passenger and commercial vehicles, throughout the 5.9 gigahertz band. ITS America will be
reaching out to Representative Costello to discuss the bill. Read more here.

Contact

Ron Thaniel, VP, Legislative Affairs
rthaniel@itsa.org

Steve Bayless, VP, Regulatory Affairs & Public Policy
sbayless@itsa.org

Jason Goldman, VP, External Affairs & Stakeholder Engagement
jgoldman@itsa.org

ITS America
1100 New Jersey Ave SE Suite 850
Washington, DC 20003

Preferences | Unsubscribe