



Orange County Transportation Authority

Legislative and Communications Committee Agenda

Thursday, September 18, 2025 at 9:00 a.m.

Board Room, 550 South Main Street, Orange, California

Committee Members

Donald P. Wagner, Chair
Katrina Foley, Vice Chair
Fred Jung
Janet Nguyen
Kathy Tavoularis
Mark Tettemer

Any person with a disability who requires a modification or accommodation in order to participate in this meeting should contact the Orange County Transportation Authority (OCTA) Clerk of the Board's office at (714) 560-5676, no less than two business days prior to this meeting to enable OCTA to make reasonable arrangements to assure accessibility to this meeting.

Agenda Descriptions

Agenda descriptions are intended to give members of the public a general summary of items of business to be transacted or discussed. The posting of the recommended actions does not indicate what action will be taken. The Committee may take any action which it deems to be appropriate on the agenda item and is not limited in any way by the notice of the recommended action.

Public Availability of Agenda Materials

All documents relative to the items referenced in this agenda are available for public inspection at www.octa.net or through the Clerk of the Board's office at the OCTA Headquarters, 600 South Main Street, Orange, California.

Meeting Access and Public Comments on Agenda Items

Members of the public can either attend in-person or access live streaming of the Committee meetings by clicking this link: <https://octa.legistar.com/Calendar.aspx>

In-Person Comment

Members of the public may attend in-person and address the Board regarding any item within the subject matter jurisdiction of the Orange County Transportation Authority. Please complete a speaker's card and submit it to the Clerk of the Board and notify the Clerk regarding the agenda item number on which you wish to speak. Speakers will be recognized by the Chair at the time of the agenda item is to be considered by the Board. Comments will be limited to three minutes. The Brown Act prohibits the Board from either discussing or taking action on any non-agendized items.

LEGISLATIVE AND COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE MEETING AGENDA

Written Comment

Written public comments may also be submitted by emailing them to ClerkOffice@octa.net, and must be sent by 5:00 p.m. the day prior to the meeting. If you wish to comment on a specific agenda item, please identify the item number in your email. All public comments that are timely received will be part of the public record and distributed to the Board. Public comments will be made available to the public upon request.

Call to Order

Pledge of Allegiance

Director Nguyen

Closed Session

There are no Closed Session items scheduled.

Special Calendar

1. Conference Call with State Legislative Advocate Moira Topp

Moira Topp/Kristin Jacinto

Overview

An update of legislative items in Sacramento will be provided.

Consent Calendar (Items 2 and 3)

All items on the Consent Calendar are to be approved in one motion unless a Committee Member or a member of the public requests separate action or discussion on a specific item.

2. Approval of Minutes

Clerk of the Board

Recommendation(s)

Approve the minutes of the July 17, 2025 Legislative and Communications Committee meeting.

Attachments:

[Minutes](#)

3. Agreement for Public Outreach Services for the State Route 57 Northbound Improvement Project between Orangewood Avenue and Katella Avenue

Tresa Oliveri/Maggie McJilton

Overview

On June 2, 2025, the Orange County Transportation Authority released a request for proposals for public outreach consulting services during the pre-construction and construction phases of the State Route 57 Northbound Improvement Project between Orangewood Avenue and Katella Avenue in the City of Anaheim. Board of Directors' approval is requested to execute an agreement for these services.

LEGISLATIVE AND COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE MEETING AGENDA

Recommendation(s)

- A. Approve the selection of Kleinfelder Construction Services, Inc. as the firm to provide public outreach consultant services for the State Route 57 Northbound Improvement Project between Orangewood Avenue and Katella Avenue in the City of Anaheim.
- B. Authorize the Chief Executive Officer to negotiate and execute Agreement No. C-5-4104 between the Orange County Transportation Authority and Kleinfelder Construction Services, Inc., in the amount of \$499,911, for a three-year initial term with an option term of up to 24 months, to provide public outreach consultant services for the State Route 57 Northbound Improvement Project between Orangewood Avenue and Katella Avenue in the City of Anaheim.

Attachments:

[Staff Report](#)

[Attachment A](#)

[Attachment B](#)

[Attachment C](#)

Regular Calendar

4. State Legislative Status Report

Clara Brotcke/Kristin Jacinto

Overview

The Orange County Transportation Authority provides regular updates to the Legislative and Communications Committee on policy issues directly impacting its overall programs, projects, and operations. This report provides an update on actions related to the end of session for the State Legislature. This includes status updates and summaries on bills the Orange County Transportation Authority has taken positions on, and an overview of negotiations related to Cap-and-Trade reauthorization and the formation of a task force related to implementation of SB 375 (Chapter 728, Statutes of 2008) is provided. A summary of a hearing related to gas tax revenues, and another related to the Senate Transportation Subcommittee on Los-Angeles-San Diego-San Luis Obispo Rail Corridor Resiliency are also included.

Recommendation(s)

Receive and file as an information item.

Attachments:

[Staff Report](#)

[Attachment A](#)

[Attachment B](#)

[Attachment C](#)

[Attachment D](#)

LEGISLATIVE AND COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE MEETING AGENDA

5. Federal Legislative Status Report

Alexis Carter/Kristin Jacinto

Overview

The Orange County Transportation Authority regularly updates the Legislative and Communications Committee on policy and regulatory issues directly impacting the agency's programs, projects, and operations. This status report includes information on the House and Senate fiscal year 2026 Transportation, Housing, and Urban Development appropriations bill, an update on the proposal to repeal the 2009 Greenhouse Gas Endangerment Finding, recent executive orders, a letter from Members of Congress related to bus purchase prices, and an update pertaining to federal actions related to the California High-Speed Rail Authority. Overviews are provided on a Senate Environment and Public Works Committee hearing and a House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee hearing.

Recommendation(s)

Receive and file as an information item.

Attachments:

[Staff Report](#)

[Attachment A](#)

[Attachment B](#)

[Attachment C](#)

[Attachment D](#)

Discussion Items

6. Public Outreach Update

Chris Boucly/Maggie McJilton

Overview

Staff will provide an update on the Orange County Transportation Authority's public outreach and community engagement efforts for capital projects, planning studies, and programs from September 2024 through August 2025.

Attachments:

[Placeholder](#)

7. Public Comments

8. Chief Executive Officer's Report

9. Committee Members' Reports

LEGISLATIVE AND COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE MEETING AGENDA

10. Adjournment

9:00 a.m. on Thursday, October 16, 2025

OCTA Headquarters

Board Room

550 South Main Street

Orange, California



Committee Members Present

Donald P. Wagner, Chair
Fred Jung
Janet Nguyen
Kathy Tavoularis
Mark Tettemer

Staff Present

Darrell E. Johnson, Chief Executive Officer
Andrea West, Clerk of the Board
Allison Cheshire, Clerk of the Board Specialist, Sr.
Cassie Trapesonian, Assistant General Counsel
OCTA Staff

Committee Members Absent

Katrina Foley, Vice Chair

Call to Order

The July 17, 2025, Legislative and Communications Committee meeting was called to order by Committee Chair Wagner at 9:00 a.m.

Special Calendar

1. Conference Call with State Legislative Advocate Moira Topp

Moira Topp, State Legislative Advocate, provided a report on this item.

No action was taken on this item.

Consent Calendar (Item 2)

2. Approval of Minutes

A motion was made by Director Jung, seconded by Director Tettemer, and declared passed by those present to approve the minutes of the June 19, 2025, Legislative and Communications Committee meeting.

Regular Calendar

3. State Legislative Status Report

Alexis Carter, Government Relations, provided a report on this item.

A motion was made by Director Jung, seconded by Director Tettemer, and declared passed by those present to adopt a SUPPORT position on AB 1085 (Stefani, D-San Francisco), which would expand the prohibition of installing, selling, or manufacturing devices that interfere with the electronic or visual readability of license plates, including toll facilities.



4. Federal Legislative Status Report

Alexis Carter, Government Relations, provided a report on this item.

No action was taken on this receive and file information item.

Discussion Items

5. Public Comments

There were no public comments.

6. Chief Executive Officer's Report

Darrell E. Johnson, Chief Executive Officer, reported on the following:

- Public meetings that have been held regarding coastal rail resiliency
- Measure M2 10-Year Review elected officials roundtables
- OC Fair Express returning on July 19

7. Committee Members' Reports

There were no Committee Member's Reports.

8. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 9:25 a.m.

The next regularly scheduled meeting of this Committee will be held:

9:00 a.m. on Thursday, August 21, 2025

OCTA Headquarters

Board Room

550 South Main Street

Orange, California

ATTEST

Andrea West
Clerk of the Board



September 18, 2025

To: Legislative and Communications Committee

From: Darrell E. Johnson, Chief Executive Officer

Subject: Agreement for Public Outreach Services for the State Route 57 Northbound Improvement Project between Orangewood Avenue and Katella Avenue

Overview

On June 2, 2025, the Orange County Transportation Authority released a request for proposals for public outreach consulting services during the pre-construction and construction phases of the State Route 57 Northbound Improvement Project between Orangewood Avenue and Katella Avenue in the City of Anaheim. Board of Directors' approval is requested to execute an agreement for these services.

Recommendations

- A. Approve the selection of Kleinfelder Construction Services, Inc. as the firm to provide public outreach consultant services for the State Route 57 Northbound Improvement Project between Orangewood Avenue and Katella Avenue in the City of Anaheim.
- B. Authorize the Chief Executive Officer to negotiate and execute Agreement No. C-5-4104 between the Orange County Transportation Authority and Kleinfelder Construction Services, Inc., in the amount of \$499,911, for a three-year initial term with an option term of up to 24 months, to provide public outreach consultant services for the State Route 57 Northbound Improvement Project between Orangewood Avenue and Katella Avenue in the City of Anaheim.

Discussion

The State Route 57 (SR-57) Northbound Improvement Project between Orangewood Avenue and Katella Avenue (Project) is part of Project G in the Measure M2 freeway program. The Project is being advanced through the updated Next 10 Delivery Plan adopted by the Orange County Transportation

Authority (OCTA) Board of Directors (Board) in November 2024. SR-57 is a major trucking route and an interregional link between Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, and San Bernardino counties, providing direct and indirect access to employment centers, recreational attractions, shopping malls, medical centers, universities, airports, residential, and other land uses. There are several major traffic generators within the Project vicinity including Angel Stadium, the Honda Center, the Grove of Anaheim, Anaheim Regional Transportation Intermodal Center (ARTIC), and the OC Vibe residential/commercial development.

The Project will extend the fifth general purpose lane in the northbound direction on SR-57 between Orangewood Avenue and Katella Avenue, improve the northbound Katella Avenue off-ramp by providing an additional exit lane, reconfigure the existing Orangewood Avenue on- and off-ramps, upgrade the nonstandard median to current standards, and re-establish the existing auxiliary lane.

Construction will generally be completed in four stages. Stage 1 activities include improving three bridges, constructing two ramps, and building three retaining walls. Stage 2 includes constructing two ramps and a segment of new freeway pavement. Stage 3 activities include constructing additional new freeway pavement. Stage 4 includes replacing the concrete barrier in the freeway median. All these activities will require intermittent closures and detours.

Multiple full-freeway closures will be needed on northbound SR-57 to allow crews to complete bridge work. Project construction is anticipated to begin in late 2025 and be completed in mid-2028.

Extensive outreach efforts are needed to communicate major activities, closures, and detours to residents, business owners, large employers, entertainment and sports venues, motorists, and trucking and tourism organizations. Coordination with ongoing projects, such as OC Vibe adjacent to the Project, is also a critical element of the outreach efforts.

OCTA, with consultant support, will implement a comprehensive public outreach program engaging all stakeholders, including hard-to-reach and underrepresented communities, in addition to high visibility stakeholders such as entertainment, sports, and tourism representatives. The program will include a variety of methods and tools such as:

- Conducting one-on-one meetings with city representatives, key stakeholders, community-based organizations, and members of the business, ethnic, and faith-based communities
- Providing city council and speakers bureau presentations

- Developing and sending email newsletters, text notifications, and other digital communication tools
- Hosting in-person and virtual meetings with neighborhood participants and other audiences
- Providing an interactive map of closures and detours
- Developing content for digital communications such as social media and a project website
- Creating project branding
- Producing print and digital collateral materials
- Distributing notifications, including digital and in-person canvassing when necessary
- Researching, resolving, and tracking constituent inquiries

In addition, the consultant will assist, as needed, with pre- and post-construction surveys, and facilitate and document the claims process in accordance with California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) procedures.

Procurement Approach

The procurement was handled in accordance with OCTA Board-approved procedures for professional and technical services. Various factors are considered in the award for professional and technical services. Award is recommended to the firm offering the most comprehensive overall proposal considering such factors as prior experience with similar projects, staffing and project organization, and work plan, as well as cost and price.

On June 2, 2025, Request for Proposals (RFP) 5-4104 was issued electronically on CAMM NET. The Project was advertised in a newspaper of general circulation on June 2 and June 9, 2025. A pre-proposal conference was held on June 10, 2025, with five attendees representing three firms. Two addenda were issued to make available the pre-proposal conference registration sheet and presentation, as well as provide responses to written questions related to the RFP.

On July 1, 2025, four proposals were received. An evaluation committee consisting of OCTA staff from the Contracts Administration and Materials Management, Public Outreach, Public Information Office, and Capital Project Delivery departments, as well as an external evaluator from Caltrans met to review all the proposals received.

The proposals were evaluated based on the following evaluation criteria and weightings:

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|------------|
| • Qualifications of the Firm | 20 percent |
| • Staffing and Project Organization | 25 percent |
| • Work Plan | 30 percent |
| • Cost and Price | 25 percent |

Several factors were considered in developing the evaluation criteria weightings. Qualifications of the firm was weighted at 20 percent as the firms had to demonstrate public outreach experience on complex transportation projects during construction phases. Staffing and project organization was weighted at 25 percent as the firms had to demonstrate an experienced, well-rounded team consisting of senior and junior level staff having adequate availability, as well as relevant experience performing outreach services on large construction projects. Work plan was weighted at 30 percent as the plan had to consider the unique needs of a corridor composed of residential, commercial, and industrial businesses. Additionally, the proposed work plan had to demonstrate an understanding of the Project scope and challenges, as well as the level of effort required. Cost and price was weighted at 25 percent to ensure that OCTA receives value for the services provided.

The evaluation committee utilized a best-value selection process for this RFP. The best-value determination is based on a 100-point scale with 75 points based on the evaluation of the technical proposal and the remaining 25 points based on the evaluation of the price proposal. The RFP required proposing firms to submit a separate price proposal in a sealed package. In order to focus on the technical aspects of the proposals, the evaluation committee first evaluated the written proposals on technical merit based on the weighted criteria for qualifications of the firm, staffing and project organization, and work plan. After the interviews and the technical scores of the short-listed firms were finalized, the sealed price proposals of only the short-listed firms were opened and shared with the evaluation committee. The cost and price score was then factored into the overall proposal score for a maximum of 100 points.

On July 15, 2025, the evaluation committee reviewed the four proposals received based on the evaluation criteria and short-listed the two most qualified firms listed below in alphabetical order:

Firm and Location

Costin Public Outreach Group, Inc. (CPOG)
Headquarters: Huntington Beach, California
Project Office: Huntington Beach, California

Kleinfelder Construction Services, Inc. (Kleinfelder)
Headquarters: San Diego, California
Project Office: Laguna Hills, California

On July 22, 2025, the evaluation committee conducted interviews with the two short-listed firms. The interviews consisted of a presentation by each firm to demonstrate the firms' understanding of OCTA's requirements. The firms' project managers and key team members had an opportunity to present each team's qualifications and respond to the evaluation committee's questions. Questions were related to addressing communication challenges, quality control process, availability, as well as specific clarification questions related to each firm's proposal.

Based on the evaluation of the written technical proposals and the information obtained from the interviews, as well as cost and price, the evaluation committee recommends Kleinfelder for consideration of the award. The following is a brief summary of the proposal evaluation results.

Qualifications of the Firm

Both firms demonstrated relevant experience providing public outreach for complex transportation projects during the pre-construction and construction phases, including managing crisis communication, implementation of temporary construction easements, coordinating temporary lodging, facilitating a claims process, and managing multilingual helplines.

Kleinfelder was founded in 1986 and has 92 employees. The firm is headquartered in the City of San Diego and has an office in the City of Laguna Hills. The firm demonstrated extensive public outreach experience working on projects such as OCTA's Interstate 405 (I-405) Improvement Project and Active Transportation Outreach and Engagement Support Project. Additionally, the firm has worked on the OC Great Park Build-Out Project, the ARTIC, as well as Orange County Public Works projects. Kleinfelder proposed one subcontractor for account coordinator support. The firm received positive feedback from its references.

CPOG was founded in 2013 and is based in the City of Huntington Beach. The firm has 16 employees and has provided public outreach services on various projects with the San Bernardino County Transportation Authority (SBCTA), such as the San Bernardino Express Lanes, State Route 60 Archibald Avenue Interchange, State Route 60 Central Avenue Interchange, and Mount Vernon Avenue Bridge. The firm is currently providing public outreach services to OCTA on the State Route 55 (SR-55) Improvement Project between I-405 and Interstate 5. The firm proposed one subcontractor to provide social media marketing services support. CPOG received positive comments from its references.

Staffing and Project Organization

Kleinfelder proposed a project team with extensive experience. The proposed project manager has 20 years of experience in community outreach and public relations and led outreach efforts on major projects such as the I-405 Improvement Project and the City of Irvine Public Engagement Services for the Great Park Build-Out. Additionally, the proposed project manager spearheaded development of the I-405 Improvement Project's ArcGIS Online Interactive Map. The firm proposed a lead community liaison with 12 years of experience, which includes writing and editing copy for media campaigns, construction alerts, social media, and public notifications, as well as serving as an on-air host for project messaging. The proposed lead community liaison's experience includes OCTA's I-405 Improvement Project and Active Transportation Outreach and Engagement Support Project, and the Elsinore Valley Municipal Water District's Sedco Hills and Avenues Septic to Sewer Conversion Project. The firm proposed a team that consists of several senior-level staff with comprehensive freeway construction experience. The firm indicated that it has a deep bench of staff that can be utilized as needed. Furthermore, the team is cross-trained to ensure continuity and flexibility in outreach efforts should unexpected circumstances arise requiring additional support. The project team provided detailed responses that reflected a well-coordinated and experienced staff, with clear evidence of strong internal communication and prior collaboration, particularly between key personnel. Their deep knowledge of local venues, targeted outreach strategies, and integration of bilingual staff demonstrate a thoughtful and proactive approach to the Project's unique communication needs.

CPOG proposed a project team with relevant experience. The proposed project manager has 18 years of public outreach experience, including developing outreach strategies for public transportation agencies for several transportation projects in Southern California such as OCTA's SR-55 Improvement Project and SBCTA's Interstate 10 Express Lanes Project. The individual proposed to serve

as the community liaison has 18 years of public outreach experience, including 16 years in municipal communications, with a strong background in stakeholder engagement, media relations, and community-focused infrastructure projects. Most of the project team are proposed with high availability and experience engaging key stakeholders on various transportation and freeway projects. CPOG acknowledged that they are currently supporting three freeway improvement projects for OCTA, all of which are ongoing. The firm noted they have a deep bench of communicators and the internal structure to support multiple concurrent contracts. Given that several team members, including proposed key personnel, are working across multiple projects, the evaluation committee was concerned that this could impact the firm's ability to fully support this Project. During the interview, the project team's presentation demonstrated an understanding and familiarity with the Project corridor and stakeholders, which included key elements of the Project and specific examples of engaging impacted audiences.

Work Plan

Kleinfelder presented a comprehensive work plan that thoroughly addressed all elements of the scope of work. The firm demonstrated a strong understanding of construction and emphasized the importance of providing timely, accurate information throughout the Project. Kleinfelder elaborated on leveraging social media technologies to educate the public, increase confidence in the Project, maintain consistent messaging and content, and remain responsive by embracing emerging communication trends. Kleinfelder emphasized inclusive outreach by engaging hard-to-reach communities and moving beyond basic translation services. The firm highlighted key stakeholders, such as the Disneyland Resort, ARTIC, and major venues like Angel Stadium and the Honda Center, and stressed ongoing communication with season pass holders affected by nearby events.

Their strategy incorporates transit advertising on buses traveling to and from ARTIC, geofencing to reach local venue visitors, and monthly tracking of engagement metrics to refine messaging. A unique partnership with Waze Mobile Ltd allows real-time updates on closures to appear across major navigation apps, while ArcGIS story maps help visually communicate Project progress. The firm presented potential Project challenges along with proposed solutions, including the coordination of multiple concurrent construction activities, maintaining consistent and timely responses, addressing last-minute schedule changes, and managing emergency communications. During the interview, Kleinfelder's project team reinforced their capabilities by offering real-world examples that demonstrated their experience, understanding of the Project, and readiness to deliver a successful outreach program.

CPOG presented a work plan that addressed all the elements of the scope of work. The firm provided clear and detailed plans for stakeholder ascertainment, constituent database development, and Project communications. The work plan also identified specific facts about the Project corridor, such as extensive/ongoing construction fatigue, maintaining school access, and mutual aid between jurisdictions. CPOG demonstrated familiarity with the Project corridor by preparing a tailored stakeholder list and outlining a broad outreach strategy that includes early engagement and virtual tools such as Zoom webinars. The proposal showed attention to branding, translation needs, and identified communication channels including social media, text messaging, Waze, and Apple Maps. However, the work plan lacked project-specific detail on how these tools would be implemented and did not clearly define metrics for evaluating outreach effectiveness. Crisis communication protocols were minimally addressed, and the roles of key team members, particularly in executing outreach and emergency updates, were vague. Engagement strategies for multicultural and active transportation groups were acknowledged but described in general terms without actionable detail or contingency planning. During the interview, the project team members provided relevant examples in their responses to the evaluation committee's questions to demonstrate their experience, understanding of the Project, and ability to implement a successful outreach program.

Cost and Price

Pricing scores were based on a formula that assigned the higher score to the firm with the lower weighted average hourly rate and scored the other proposal's weighted average hourly rate based on its relation to the lower weighted average hourly rate. Kleinfelder proposed the lower weighted average hourly rate. Therefore, Kleinfelder's proposed hourly rates are deemed fair and reasonable.

Procurement Summary

Based on the evaluation of written proposals, the firm's qualifications, the information obtained from the interviews, as well as cost and price, the evaluation committee recommends the selection of Kleinfelder as the top-ranked firm to provide public outreach consulting services for the SR-57 Northbound Improvement Project between Orangewood Avenue and Katella Avenue. Kleinfelder delivered a thorough and comprehensive proposal and a highly responsive interview addressing all the requirements of the RFP.

Fiscal Impact

The Project was approved in OCTA's Fiscal Year 2025-26 Budget, People and Community Engagement Division, Account No. 0017-7519-FG104-0IB, and is funded through local funds.

Summary


Staff is recommending the Board of Directors authorize the Chief Executive Officer to negotiate and execute Agreement No. C-5-4104 between the Orange County Transportation Authority and Kleinfelder Construction Services, Inc., in the amount of \$499,911, for a three-year initial term with an option term of up to 24 months, to provide public outreach consultant services for the State Route 57 Northbound Improvement Project between Orangewood Avenue and Katella Avenue.

Agreement for Public Outreach Services for the State Route 57 Northbound Improvement Project between Orangewood Avenue and Katella Avenue *Page 10*

Attachments

- A. Review of Proposals RFP 5-4104 Public Outreach Services for the State Route 57 Northbound Improvement Project Between Orangewood Avenue and Katella Avenue
- B. Proposal Evaluation Criteria Matrix (Short-Listed Firms) RFP 5-4104 Public Outreach Services for the State Route 57 Northbound Improvement Project Between Orangewood Avenue and Katella Avenue
- C. Contract History for the Past Two Years RFP 5-4104: Public Outreach Services for the State Route 57 Northbound Improvement Project Between Orangewood Avenue and Katella Avenue

Prepared by:



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Review of Proposals

RFP 5-4104 Public Outreach Services for the State Route 57 Northbound Improvement Project between Orangewood Avenue and Katella Avenue

Presented to Legislative and Communications Committee - September 18, 2025

4 firms proposed, 2 firms were interviewed, 1 firm is being recommended

Overall Ranking	Proposal Score	Firm & Location	Sub-Contractors	Evaluation Committee Comments	Weighted Average Hourly Rate
1	90	Kleinfelder Construction Services, Inc. Laguna Hills, California	McCormick-Busse, Inc., doing business as (dba) MBI Media	Higher-ranked firm. Experience providing public outreach for complex construction projects. Provided public outreach services for Interstate 405 (I-405) Improvement Project. Proposed project team was comprised of several individuals who had been engaged in the I-405 public outreach program. Proposed project manager has 20 years of experience and has been with the firm for ten years. Proposed two community liaisons with relevant experience and knowledge of the project corridor. Proposed lead community liaison has 12 years of experience. Proposed project team is cross-trained and multi-disciplined. Detailed approach for developing and implementing the public outreach program. Demonstrated an understanding of the Project corridor and key stakeholders. Demonstrated an understanding of the level of effort required for the Project. Presented public outreach approach and provided detailed responses to questions. Received positive responses from references. Proposed lower hourly rates.	\$145
2	84	Costin Public Outreach Group, Inc. Huntington Beach, California	Intertwined Inc. dba Become Intertwined	Experience providing public outreach for complex construction projects. Currently providing public outreach services for State Route 55 Improvement Project. Proposed project team has extensive, relevant experience. Proposed project manager has 18 years of experience. Proposed community liaison has 18 years of experience, including 16 years in municipal communications. Detailed approach for developing and implementing a public outreach program. Demonstrated an understanding of the Project corridor and key stakeholders. Discussed specific activities related to the Project, such as right-of-way, temporary construction easements, and utility relocation. Identified potential challenges and proposed solutions. Presented public outreach approach and answered questions during the interview. Received positive responses from references. Proposed higher hourly rates.	\$156

Evaluation Panel:

Internal:

Contracts Administration and Materials Management (1)

Public Outreach (2)

Capital Programs (1)

Public Information Office (1)

External:

California Department of Transportation (1)

Proposal Criteria

Qualifications of the Firm

Staffing and Project Organization

Work Plan

Cost and Price

Weight Factors

20%

25%

30%

25%

PROPOSAL EVALUATION CRITERIA MATRIX (Short-Listed Firms)
RFP 5-4104 Public Outreach Services for the State Route 57 Northbound Improvement Project
between Orangewood Avenue and Katella Avenue

Kleinfelder Construction Services, Inc.						Weights	Overall Score
Evaluator Number	1	2	3	4	5	6	
Qualifications of Firm	4.5	4.5	4.5	4.5	4.5	4.5	4
Staffing/Project Organization	4.5	4.0	4.0	4.5	4.0	4.0	5
Work Plan	4.5	4.5	4.5	4.5	4.0	4.5	6
Cost and Price	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5
Overall Score	92.5	90.0	90.0	92.5	87.0	90.0	90
Costin Public Outreach Group, Inc.						Weights	Overall Score
Evaluator Number	1	2	3	4	5	6	
Qualifications of Firm	4.5	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.5	4
Staffing/Project Organization	4.5	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	5
Work Plan	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	3.5	3.5	6
Cost and Price	4.7	4.7	4.7	4.7	4.7	4.7	5
Overall Score	88.0	83.5	83.5	83.5	80.5	82.5	84

Range of scores for non-short-listed firms was 47 to 49.

CONTRACT HISTORY FOR THE PAST TWO YEARS

RFP 5-4104: Public Outreach Services for the State Route 57 Northbound Improvement Project between Orangewood Avenue and Katella Avenue

Prime and Subconsultants	Contract No.	Description	Contract Start Date	Contract End Date	Subconsultant Amount	Total Contract Amount
Costin Public Outreach Group, Inc.	C-0-2104	Public Outreach for State Route 55 Improvement Project	June 2, 2021	May 31, 2026		\$ 1,684,990
Contract Type: Time-and-Expense						
Subconsultants:						
AJ Design						
Become Intertwined						
Franklin Hill Group						
Lazar Translating & Interpreting						
The Sierra Group						
Costin Public Outreach Group, Inc.	C-2-2796	Public Outreach for State Route 91 Improvement Project	May 1, 2023	April 30, 2029		\$ 1,842,755
Contract Type: Time-and-Expense						
Subconsultants:						
AJ Design						
Become Intertwined						
Hill International, Inc.						
Lazar Translating & Interpreting						
The Sierra Group						
Costin Public Outreach Group, Inc.	C-2-3025	Public Outreach for the Interstate-605/Katella Avenue Interchange Project	September 18, 2023	July 31, 2026		\$ 399,887
Contract Type: Time-and-Expense						
Subconsultants:						
AJ Design						
Become Intertwined						
Lazar Translating & Interpreting						
The Sierra Group						
Costin Public Outreach Group, Inc.	C-4-2203	Marketing Outreach Support Services	October 31, 2024	October 31, 2026		\$ 120,000
Contract Type: Time-and-Expense						
Subconsultants:						
None						
Total						\$ 4,047,632
Kleinfelder Construction Services, Inc.	C-1-3369	Health Safety and Environmental Compliance Support Services	December 22, 2021	June 30, 2024		\$ 126,000
Contract Type: Time-and-Expense						
Subconsultants:						
Aerovironment Environment Services, Inc.						
Aurora Industrial Hygiene						
Esci Enviroservices						
Global Asr Consulting, Inc.						
Kleinfelder Construction Services, Inc.	C-3-3020	Active Transportation Outreach and Engagement Support	May 28, 2024	December 31, 2025		\$ 399,058
Contract Type: Time-and-Expense						
Subconsultants:						
None						

CONTRACT HISTORY FOR THE PAST TWO YEARS**RFP 5-4104: Public Outreach Services for the State Route 57 Northbound Improvement Project between Orangewood Avenue and Katella Avenue**

Prime and Subconsultants	Contract No.	Description	Contract Start Date	Contract End Date	Subconsultant Amount	Total Contract Amount
Kleinfelder Construction Services, Inc.	C-4-2488	Public Outreach for the Interstate 5 Improvement Project from Interstate 405 to State Route 55	May 22, 2025	March 31, 2031		\$ 1,199,260
Contract Type: Time-and-Expense						
Subconsultants:						
<i>AJ Design</i>						
<i>Fountainhead Consulting Corporation</i>						
<i>Hout Construction Services, Inc.</i>						
<i>McCormick-Busse, Inc., doing business as (dba) MBI Media</i>						
<i>Southwest Strategies</i>						
<i>Syrusa Engineering, Inc.</i>						
Kleinfelder Construction Services, Inc.	C-5-4075	Geotechnical Engineering Design Review	June 16, 2025	December 31, 2026		\$ 39,251
Contract Type: Time-and-Expense						
Subconsultants:						
<i>None</i>						
Kleinfelder Construction Services, Inc.	C-9-1571	Public Outreach for Interstate 405 Improvement Project	June 30, 2020	June 30, 2025		\$ 4,126,544
Contract Type: Time-and-Expense						
Subconsultants:						
<i>AJ Design</i>						
<i>Arrowgtp</i>						
<i>Hill International, Inc.</i>						
<i>Kennedy Communications</i>						
<i>Lazar Translating & Interpreting</i>						
<i>MBI Media</i>						
<i>RDS Printing & Graphics</i>						
Total						\$ 5,890,113



September 18, 2025

To: Legislative and Communications Committee
From: Darrell E. Johnson, Chief Executive Officer
Subject: State Legislative Status Report

Overview

The Orange County Transportation Authority provides regular updates to the Legislative and Communications Committee on policy issues directly impacting its overall programs, projects, and operations. This report provides an update on actions related to the end of session for the State Legislature. This includes status updates and summaries on bills the Orange County Transportation Authority has taken positions on, and an overview of negotiations related to Cap-and-Trade reauthorization and the formation of a task force related to implementation of SB 375 (Chapter 728, Statutes of 2008) is provided. A summary of a hearing related to gas tax revenues, and another related to the Senate Transportation Subcommittee on Los-Angeles-San Diego-San Luis Obispo Rail Corridor Resiliency are also included.

Recommendation

Receive and file as an information item.

Discussion

The Legislature has until September 12, 2025, to approve legislation to be submitted to Governor Newsom. The Governor will have until October 12, 2025, to sign or veto bills that the Legislature passed. At the time of writing this staff report, several bills on which the Orange County Transportation Authority (OCTA) has taken a position remain active. Below is the status of those bills:

AB 394 (Wilson, D-Suisun City): Public Transportation Providers

Position: Support

Status: Pending on Senate Floor

AB 394 clarifies and expands protections for public transit employees by affirming that transit agencies and their unions may seek workplace violence restraining orders on behalf of employees who experience threats, harassment, or assault while on the job. The bill ensures that public transit agencies, including

those operating through contractors, are clearly recognized as eligible petitioners under the existing workplace violence restraining order statute. It also expands the definition of protected transit workers to include a broader range of employees and contractors, such as station agents, fare collectors, and janitorial staff.

While the bill's initial language expressly authorized courts to issue prohibition orders that could bar individuals from the entire public transit system following a battery against a transit worker, this provision was subsequently removed amid concerns about its overly broad reach.

AB 394 strengthens the tools available to protect frontline employees from workplace violence.

AB 986 (Muratsuchi, D-Torrance): State of Emergency and Local Emergency: Landslides and Climate Change

Position: Support

Status: Pending on Senate Floor

AB 986 expands the definition of emergencies under California's emergency management laws to include landslides. Under current law, the California Emergency Services Act outlines conditions under which state or local emergencies may be declared but does not explicitly identify landslides.

This clarification could help address disruptions to transportation and infrastructure systems caused by landslides. In Orange County, repeated landslides along the Los Angeles – San Diego – San Luis Obispo (LOSSAN) Rail Corridor – particularly in the City of San Clemente (City) – have forced extended rail closures, required emergency construction, and led to rising costs. Since 2021, landslides along the LOSSAN corridor in the City have triggered more than a year of suspended service, \$14 million in lost passenger revenue, and over \$37 million in emergency response costs.

For OCTA, AB 986 provides a critical legal foundation to respond more swiftly to these incidents. OCTA owns and maintains over 40 miles of the LOSSAN Rail Corridor in Orange County, including vulnerable segments that have required repeated stabilization efforts.

By formally recognizing landslides as emergencies, AB 986 enables faster mobilization of resources, supports timely permitting, and strengthens the state's ability to protect essential transportation infrastructure. This means improved resilience, reduced service disruptions, and better protection for millions of passengers, freight operations, and military logistics that rely on the LOSSAN Rail Corridor.

AB 1085 (Stefani, D-San Francisco): License Plates: Obstruction or Alteration

Position: Support

Status: Pending with Governor

AB 1085 strengthens enforcement against license plate obstruction by explicitly banning the use, sale, and manufacture of devices such as tints, shades, or coatings that interfere with visual or electronic plate readability. This includes interference with toll systems, law enforcement tools, and emissions monitoring technologies. The bill also prohibits manufacturing these devices in California and increases the penalty for selling or manufacturing them from \$250 to \$1,000 per item. The bill also institutes a \$250 fine for using these devices. For OCTA, AB 1085 would help reduce toll evasion by targeting products designed to obscure license plates, which result in lost revenue and higher enforcement costs. OCTA's 91 Express Lanes alone lose an estimated \$204,000 annually due to obstructed plates, with further losses expected with the implementation of the 405 Express Lanes. These devices not only impact tolling systems but also impede criminal investigations and public safety efforts by hiding vehicle identities.

SB 71 (Wiener, D-San Francisco): California Environmental Quality Act: Exemptions: Environmental Leadership Transit Projects

Position: Support

Status: Pending concurrence in Senate

SB 71 would extend and clarify exemptions under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) for transit and active transportation projects, offering long-term certainty and expanded eligibility for transportation agencies like OCTA. Through 2030, the bill exempts pedestrian and bicycle facilities, transit prioritization projects, bus, bus rapid transit, and light rail service (including related stations and operations facilities), as well as infrastructure for zero-emission buses, trains, and ferries. Through 2032, exemptions also apply to projects expanding microtransit, paratransit, shuttle, ferry, passenger rail, and other transit services when they primarily use near-zero-emission, low-nitrogen oxide, compressed natural gas, or hybrid technologies. Through 2040, exemptions are extended to facilities used primarily by Tier 4 (or cleaner) locomotives and rolling stock that are not zero-emission.

To qualify for these exemptions, agencies must meet specific requirements. The project cannot create new automobile capacity and must be located within an existing public right-of-way. For projects that exceed \$50 million, agencies must conduct specific analyses and hold public meetings. Additionally, projects cannot demolish affordable housing units and must meet labor requirements. SB 71 also reinforces the legal framework for such projects by clarifying that cost thresholds triggering additional review are based on the engineer's estimate at the time the exemption is sought. It also allows these thresholds to adjust with inflation, preventing unexpected disqualifications as costs rise over time.

For OCTA, SB 71 would help streamline future efforts similar to the OC Connect project, which is creating a four-mile active transportation trail linking the cities of Santa Ana and Garden Grove. Projects like OC Connect benefit from CEQA streamlining because they are built within existing public rights-of-way, do not increase vehicle capacity, and support regional goals for clean, multimodal travel.

SB 364 (Strickland, R-Huntington Beach): Outdoor Advertising Displays: Permits: New Alignments

Position: Support

Status: Pending on Assembly Floor

SB 364 streamlines the state's outdoor advertising permit process by allowing applications to be submitted for displays along highway segments once those segments are open for public use, even if the overall highway project has not yet been formally accepted as complete. Under current law, the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) is not obligated to process advertising display permit applications until a highway project reaches official completion. This can result in unnecessary delays, even when portions of a project are already open and operational.

SB 364 directs Caltrans to begin processing outdoor advertising permits as soon as a highway segment is open to vehicular traffic, provided the proposed display location is within 1,000 feet of the open segment. Caltrans is only required to process, not specifically approve, permit applications under these conditions. For OCTA and its local government partners, SB 364 supports more efficient alignment between infrastructure delivery and permitting, helping to prevent bottlenecks that delay signage placement along newly opened roads. Several Orange County cities have encountered setbacks under current practice when trying to place displays near highway segments that are in use but not officially completed. This bill addresses this concern while preserving all applicable safety, operational, and regulatory requirements.

Cap-and-Trade and State Budget Negotiations Update

California's Cap-and-Trade Program currently provides funding via ongoing appropriations for public transportation through key programs: the Low Carbon Transit Operations Program (LCTOP) and the Transit and Intercity Rail Capital Program (TIRCP). LCTOP distributes formula-based funding annually to support projects that reduce greenhouse gas emissions, while TIRCP awards competitive funding for major transit and rail improvements. LCTOP receives five percent of annual revenues each year and TIRCP receives ten percent. OCTA has received funding from both programs. The OC Streetcar and Coastal Rail Resiliency Improvements have been supported by TIRCP, and Youth Ride Free and the College Pass Program have been funded through LCTOP.

The Legislature and Governor have both indicated an intention to reauthorize California's Cap-and-Trade Program this year as it expires in 2030. At the time of the writing of this staff report, bill language for the reauthorization was released as AB 1207 (Irwin, D-Thousand Oaks) renaming the program the "Cap-and-Invest Program" and extends the program through 2045, in conjunction with a new expenditure plan structure outlined under SB 840 (Limon, D-Santa Barbara). The new expenditure plan language dedicates \$1 billion annually to high-speed rail and \$1 billion to legislative discretionary programs, beginning in FY 2026–27, and sets baseline annual funding levels of \$800 million for the Affordable Housing and Sustainable Communities Program, \$400 million for TIRCP, \$200 million for LCTOP, \$200 million for forestry and fire protection, and \$130 million for safe drinking water. This is in addition to about \$200 million taken off the top for areas such as green manufacturing. Revenues above these amounts could be redirected at legislative discretion. As the bill was only just introduced, not all details are available. Negotiations remain fluid and will continue to evolve in the near term.

Recent letters sent prior to the release of the Cap-and-Trade reauthorization bill highlight perspectives from Southern California stakeholders. The first letter is from a coalition of Southern California transit agencies, including OCTA, the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority, Metrolink, the Riverside County Transportation Commission, the San Bernardino County Transportation Authority, the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG), and the Ventura County Transportation Commission. Addressed to pro Tem McGuire, Speaker Rivas, Senator Scott Wiener (D-San Francisco), and Assembly Member Jesse Gabriel (D-Encino), the letter outlines regional priorities for reauthorization. These include ensuring proportional investment in Southern California, maintaining or increasing funding for the TIRCP and the LCTOP, and establishing a dedicated funding source for regional rail operations. The letter emphasizes that stable, long-term investment is critical to supporting California's climate and mobility goals. The priorities expressed are consistent with OCTA's Board-approved Cap-and-Trade principles. This letter is included as Attachment A.

A second letter was submitted by the Los Angeles County Legislative Delegation, led by Senator Henry Stern (D-Calabasas), to Governor Newsom, Senate President pro Tempore Mike McGuire (D-Healdsburg), and Assembly Speaker Robert Rivas (D-Hollister) urging that \$3.3 billion annually from Cap-and-Trade revenues be invested in Los Angeles County regional transit. Their letter notes the region's high travel demand, ongoing air quality challenges, and the need for equity in funding distribution. It calls for investments to increase bus and rail service frequency, support for capital improvements such as electrification and grade separations, and prioritize projects benefiting disadvantaged communities. This letter is included as Attachment B. Similarly, a letter was submitted by the Bay Area Legislative Delegation, led by Senator Dave Cortese, Chair of the Senate Transportation Committee,

requesting \$2.2 billion annually from Cap-and-Trade revenues for key Bay Area bookend projects. This letter is included as Attachment C.

Together, these letters reflect the ongoing discussions about how Cap-and-Trade revenues should be allocated. While legislative negotiations continue, both elected officials and transit agencies have emphasized the importance of ensuring that funding commitments are structured to provide long-term benefits across regions, including Southern California.

In addition to the ongoing negotiations around Cap-and-Trade reauthorization, the Legislature moved forward on a Budget Bill Jr. before session ended, appropriating \$368 million for the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund, the primary revenue account of Cap-and-Trade. This includes \$180 million for TIRCP Cycle 6 and \$188 million for the SB 125 (Chapter 54, Statutes of 2023) formula-based TIRCP, following through on commitments in the 2025 Budget Act that had been previously flagged as at risk. The bill also postponed consideration of General Fund loans for Bay Area transit agencies and the Los Angeles region until the fiscal year 2026-27 state budget, noting additional analysis to be done by the Department of Finance on the framework of any potential loan. Finally, the bill begins the appropriations of funding from the Climate Bond, including \$62 million for coastal resilience projects.

Negotiations are quickly evolving; staff will provide a verbal update of where things stand at the September 18, 2025, Legislative and Communications Committee meeting.

Formation of California Sustainable Communities Task Force

On August 25, 2025, California Transportation Secretary Toks Omishakin announced the establishment of the California Sustainable Communities Task Force (Task Force), a 30-member body formed to coordinate work on the state's climate, housing, equity, and transportation goals. The Task Force builds on existing state climate initiatives, including SB 375 (Chapter 375, Statutes of 2008) and the California Air Resources Board's (CARB) 2022 Scoping Plan, which outlines a pathway to carbon neutrality by 2045. The Task Force will also coordinate with Caltrans, the California Transportation Commission, CARB, the Department of Housing and Community Development, the Governor's Office of Land Use and Climate Innovation, and the Strategic Growth Council.

The Task Force includes representatives from state and regional agencies, local governments, transit providers, community-based organizations, housing and environmental groups, academic institutions, and rural and underserved communities. Notably, SCAG, the Riverside County Transportation Commission, and Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority are represented, along with statewide advocacy organizations such as the California Transit Association and the California Association of Councils of Governments. OCTA

is not included as a member of the Task Force. The press release with the full list of participants is included as Attachment D.

The Task Force will develop policy recommendations intended to assist regions in reducing greenhouse gas emissions, aligning land-use and transportation planning, and advancing implementation of sustainable communities strategies. Focus areas identified for the Task Force include sustainable transportation and land-use planning, system management and pricing strategies, climate resilience and adaptation, funding and governance for regional implementation, and updated metrics and modeling approaches. The Task Force is expected to produce a final report in November 2026 with recommendations for legislative, regulatory, and budgetary actions to support regional implementation of sustainable communities strategies, statewide greenhouse gas emissions, and vehicle miles traveled reduction goals.

Summary of Assembly Transportation Committee Informational Hearing on Alternatives to the Gas Tax

On August 25, 2025, the Assembly Committee on Transportation, chaired by Assembly Member Lori Wilson (D-Suisun City), held an informational hearing titled *"Other States' Alternatives to the Gas Tax."* The discussion focused on the challenge California faces as gas tax revenues decline, with projections showing a \$31 billion shortfall in the next decade. Lawmakers heard from researchers and state transportation officials about options for sustainable and equitable funding mechanisms that other states have begun to implement.

Douglas Shinkle of the National Conference of State Legislatures explained that gas taxes have fallen from 41 percent of state transportation revenue in 2016 to 36 percent in 2024. He outlined approaches such as electric vehicle (EV) registration fees, delivery surcharges, and road usage charges (RUC). Dr. Alan Jenn of the UC Institute for Transportation Studies assessed alternatives, concluding that while RUCs best reflect a user-pays system, they present higher administrative costs. Trish Hendren of the Eastern Transportation Coalition stressed the importance of public outreach and pilot programs, noting that concerns over privacy, fairness, and cost can be addressed through careful program design.

Committee members raised concerns about equity and affordability. Assembly Member Rhodesia Ransom (D-Stockton) questioned how commuters who must drive long distances would fare under a mileage-based system, while Assembly Member Tom Lackey (R-Palmdale) cautioned against imposing a new tax without repealing the gas tax, arguing that California's high fuel costs are already burdening working families. Chair Wilson emphasized that no proposal has yet been introduced and that affordability will remain a central consideration as the Legislature develops options.

Officials from Hawaii, Oregon, Utah, and Virginia described their programs. Hawaii launched its RUC program in July 2025, requiring EV owners to choose between a per-mile fee or a \$50 flat fee, with mandatory participation beginning in 2028 and expansion to all light-duty vehicles by 2033. Utah has offered EV drivers a choice between a per-mile fee and a \$143 annual fee since 2020, with nearly 10,000 participants and costs declining as the program scales. Oregon, the first state to operate an RUC, is now considering mandatory enrollment for EVs by 2027 and hybrids by 2028. Virginia pairs a Highway Use Fee on fuel-efficient vehicles with an optional Mileage Choice Program that lets drivers pay per mile instead, with about 23,000 enrollees to date.

The hearing underscored the urgency of replacing or supplementing the gas tax with sustainable revenue streams. While RUCs and other mechanisms show promise, California lawmakers must weigh funding needs against affordability, fairness, and climate policy goals as they chart a path forward.

Senate Transportation Subcommittee on Los Angeles – San Diego – San Luis Obispo Rail Corridor Resiliency Hearing

On August 28, 2025, the Senate Transportation Subcommittee on LOSSAN Rail Corridor Resiliency, chaired by Senator Catherine Blakespear (D-Encinitas), held an informational hearing entitled *“Getting it Right – Advancing Rail Reforms in Southern California.”* The hearing examined strategies to increase ridership, deliver projects more effectively, and improve governance for the state’s second busiest passenger rail corridor. In her opening remarks, Chair Blakespear emphasized the state’s goal of boosting rail ridership by 20 percent and announced her intent to advance governance reforms through SB 1098 (Chapter 777, Statutes of 2024). The first panel featured Chad Edison, Chief Deputy Secretary for Rail and Transit at the California State Transportation Agency, and Kyle Gradinger, Chief of the Division of Rail at Caltrans. Both discussed preparations for the 2028 Olympics, the status of implementing SB 1098, and the corridor identification process, stressing that reliability and frequency must guide investments. The second panel included Philip Mark Plotch, Principal Researcher and Senior Fellow at the Eno Center for Transportation, Gillian Gillett, Manager of the California Integrated Mobility Program at Caltrans, Darbi Berry, Director of the San Diego Regional Climate Collaborative at the University of San Diego, and Professor Kari Edison Watkins of the University of California, Davis. Testimony addressed high project delivery costs, adoption of General Transit Feed Specification real-time data standards, expansion of statewide payment options, and strategies to reverse ridership declines. The third panel featured Juan Matute, Deputy Director of the University of California, Los Angeles Institute of Transportation Studies, Professor Genevieve Giuliano of the University of Southern California, and Frank Jimenez, Senior Fiscal and Policy Analyst at the Legislative Analyst’s Office. They encouraged updates to the Transportation Development Act, consideration of state ownership of rail assets, exploration of open-loop fare systems and road

user charges, and reevaluation of governance structures and funding mechanisms.

During discussion, Chair Blakespear raised concerns about the ability of regional agencies such as the San Diego Association of Governments to deliver major projects, citing delays despite significant state funding allocations. Witnesses cited environmental review processes and the dominance of local perspectives as barriers to progress.

Summary

An update is provided on legislation that the Orange County Transportation Authority has taken a position on. An update on Cap-and-Trade and the formation of a new task force on sustainable communities is provided. Two summaries of informational hearings related to transportation are given.

Attachments

- A. Letter from Stephanie Wiggins, Chief Executive Officer, Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority, and others, to the Honorable Mike McGuire, President pro Tempore, California State Senate, and others, dated August 21, 2025, re: Cap-and-Trade Reauthorization Priorities
- B. Letter from the Honorable Henry Stern, Member, California State Senate, and others, to the Honorable Gavin Newsom, Governor, State of California, and others, dated August 26, 2025
- C. Letter from the Honorable Dave Cortese, Chair, California State Senate Transportation Committee, and others, to the Honorable Gavin Newsom, Governor, State of California, and others, dated September 2, 2025
- D. List of Sustainable Communities Task Force Participants, California State Transportation Agency

Prepared by:



Clara Brotcke
Government Relations Representative, Associate,
Government Relations
(714) 560-5329

Approved by:



Kristin Jacinto
Executive Director,
Government Relations
(714) 560-5754



August 21, 2025

The Honorable Mike McGuire
President pro Tempore
California State Senate
1021 O Street, Suite 8518
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Robert Rivas
Speaker
California State Assembly
1021 O Street, Suite 8330
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Scott Wiener, Chair
Senate Budget & Fiscal Review
Committee
1021 O Street, Suite 8620
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Jesse Gabriel, Chair
Assembly Committee on Budget
1021 O Street, Suite 8230
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Cap-and-Trade Reauthorization Priorities

Dear pro Tem McGuire, Speaker Rivas, Chair Wiener and Chair Gabriel:

We, the undersigned representatives of Southern California transit agencies, write to express our support for prioritizing investment in regional transit systems as part of the reauthorization of the State's Cap-and-Trade program, and outline our priorities for the program going forward. The Southern California region served by Metrolink and our transit systems is home to over 20 million people and includes some of the highest concentrations of disadvantaged communities. The region faces both severe air quality challenges and significant greenhouse gas emissions. We have developed a comprehensive regionwide strategy to reduce these emissions and meet the region's greenhouse gas emission reduction targets via the Southern California Association of Governments' Sustainable Communities Strategy, recently approved by the California Air Resources Board. However, much of that strategy is predicated on the need to grow and maintain our region's transit system and services. As such, it is imperative that cap-and-trade funds be invested proportionately in our region for transit purposes.

A robust cap-and-trade investment plan is critical to the success of meeting the State's climate goals, and we are grateful to the Governor and our legislative colleagues for your

commitment to improving this program and transportation across the State. The decision before the State today is one that will have a 20-year impact on progress towards a healthier and more sustainable climate. This investment plan will be a product of our State's values and priorities for the future. As we continue to consider the future of our State's climate goals, we would like to outline priorities and solutions for ensuring that public transit is an integral part of this reauthorization. With that in mind, we would like to highlight the following three key priorities.

1. **If the Legislature provides long-term, guaranteed minimum funding to high-speed rail, a proportionate share of that funding must be directed to Southern California.** The Governor's investment plan, as proposed today, would make the California High-Speed Rail project the only substantive infrastructure investment by the State, with no guarantee that any of this investment will take place in Southern California over the next 20 years. The Legislature should direct a share of HSR funding to Southern California's regional rail system projects that have a direct connection to the future HSR network. These investments in regional rail will yield immediate benefits for California's largest population centers and help support mode shift and emission reduction goals.
2. **Maintain or increase the share of cap-and-trade funding directed towards the Transit and Intercity Rail Capital Program (TIRCP).** TIRCP supports transit capital project construction, which creates thousands of jobs, leading to increased economic development and a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions. Over the next two decades, transit agencies will bring forward projects across the region that will improve mobility, reduce vehicle miles traveled, and preserve the backbone of our State's rail system. Though many counties have voted to tax themselves to fund transportation projects, robust investment from state and federal sources is crucial to the advancement of these connections. Currently, TIRCP receives 10 percent of cap-and-trade funding each year via ongoing appropriations. In addition, cap-and-trade funding has been used for recent TIRCP formula programs to directly assist transit agencies with operating and capital needs. These projects and programs would not receive any significant funding under the current proposal. Further, it is unclear if existing committed funds dedicated to transit projects through 2030 will be maintained. Both the honoring of existing commitments and a future dedication of funding for TIRCP are necessary to sustain regional transit needs.
3. **Maintain or increase the share of cap-and-trade funding dedicated towards the Low Carbon Transit Operations Program (LCTOP).** LCTOP supports innovative operations programs within our region, including transit pass programs that enable youth to ride transit for free, university partnerships, and other fare promotions. In addition, the

program also helps fund the operations of new transit services, the region's transition to a zero-emission transit fleet, and other programs that help drive ridership and reduce emissions. Receiving 5 percent of annual appropriations from cap-and-trade, this program is the only formula-based cap-and-trade program for transit, guaranteeing funding for all transit agencies.

4. **We urge that any reauthorization provide a flexible dedicated funding source for regional rail agency operations, a critical tool for meeting the State's climate goals.** Regional rail services play a significant role in reducing single occupancy vehicle trips throughout California. Last year, Metrolink removed over 4.1 million car trips from California's congested roads with an average trip length of 36.7 miles. As part of the reauthorization process, we request that the State dedicate a share of cap-and-trade funding to establish a dedicated funding source that Regional Transportation Planning Agencies can use to support regional rail operations. Funds would support agencies like Metrolink, North County Transportation District's Coaster, and others throughout the state. A dedicated funding source for regional rail agency operations is critical to meeting the State's climate goals.

Thank you for considering our letter and priorities. We look forward to further dialogue with you as you consider the future of Cap-and-Trade.

Sincerely,



Stephanie Wiggins
Chief Executive Officer
Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transit
Authority



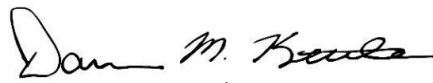
Darrell Johnson
Chief Executive Officer
Orange County Transportation Authority



Carolyn Schindler
Executive Director
San Bernardino County Transportation
Authority



Martin Erickson
Executive Director
Ventura County Transportation Commission



Darren M. Kettle
Chief Executive Officer
Metrolink



Aaron Hake
Executive Director
Riverside County Transportation Commission



Kome Ajise
Executive Director
Southern California Association of
Governments



August 26, 2025

The Honorable Gavin Newsom
Governor, State of California
1021 O Street, Suite 9000
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Mike McGuire
President pro Tempore, California State Senate
1021 O Street, Suite 8518
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Robert Rivas
Speaker, California State Assembly
1021 O Street, Suite 8330
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Governor Newsom, pro Tem McGuire, and Speaker Rivas:

We, the undersigned members of the Los Angeles County Legislative Delegation, write to express our support for the reauthorization of the state's Cap-and-Trade program, outline our priorities for the program going forward and respectfully request \$3.3 billion annually from the fund be invested in Los Angeles County regional transit.

We reject efforts to sabotage or cancel the high-speed rail project outright, as President Trump attempted to do. Resetting the politics of high-speed rail means ensuring fairness for all regions of California. Our communities deserve their fair share. The need is clear that Los Angeles County has unique challenges:

Driving demand is highest in Los Angeles County: According to Caltrans' 2024 Mobility Performance Report, District 7 (Los Angeles/Ventura) records nearly 9 billion daily freeway miles traveled—more than any other Caltrans district. When combined with neighboring Southern California districts (8, 11, and 12), the SCAG region carries over 21 billion daily freeway miles, dwarfing the Central Valley's ~2.4 billion.

Ridership and equity demands: Millions of Los Angeles County residents already depend on Metro bus and rail, Metrolink, and municipal operators. Yet service has not kept pace with need: transit ridership is still 25–30% below pre-pandemic levels, even as freeway traffic has nearly fully rebounded. Without

Letter to Governor Newsom, pro Tem McGuire, and Speaker Rivas
August 26, 2025

significant investment, super-commuters from the Valley, South LA, and the Inland Empire remain locked into long, expensive car trips.

Climate and health urgency: The South Coast Air Basin continues to be in extreme non-attainment of federal ozone standards. Los Angeles County communities—especially in the San Fernando Valley, South Los Angeles, and along goods-movement corridors—bear the brunt of pollution from vehicles and freight.

In light of previous investments in the Bay Area and the Central Valley transportation, and the current proposal to appropriate \$1 billion annually for high-speed rail, fairness and climate science require that \$3.3 billion annually be invested in Los Angeles County regional transit. This funding should:

1. Support operations to increase bus and rail service frequency, improve reliability, and restore transit as a competitive option for daily commuters.
2. Fund capital improvements, including regional connectors to high speed rail, bus rapid transit corridors, electrification of bus and rail fleets, first/last-mile safety and grade separations that reduce delays.
3. Advance equity mandates, by prioritizing projects with high road labor standards and community benefits that serve disadvantaged communities.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



TINA MCKINNOR
61st Assembly District
Chair, LA County Legislative Delegation



MARIA ELENA DURAZO
26th Senate District
Vice Chair, LA County Legislative Delegation



MARK GONZALEZ
54th Assembly District



HENRY STERN
27th Senate District



CAROLINE MENJIVAR
20th Senate District



LOLA SMALLWOOD-CUEVAS
28th Senate District



SUSAN RUBIO
22nd Senate District



JOHN HARABEDIAN
41st Assembly District



BLANCA PACHECO
64th Assembly District



MIKE GIPSON
65th Assembly District



BOB ARCHULETTA
30th Senate District



LENA GONZALEZ
33rd Senate District



BEN ALLEN
24th Senate District



SASHA RENEE PEREZ
25th Senate District

Letter to Governor Newsom, pro Tem McGuire, and Speaker Rivas
August 26, 2025

Michelle Rios AD53

Jimenez AD66

Sharon Quirk-Silva AD67

Blanca E. Rubio
AD48

Isabel Breyer AD55

Jim L. Mc AD62

Risa Calderon AD56

Sing AD57

Z AD39

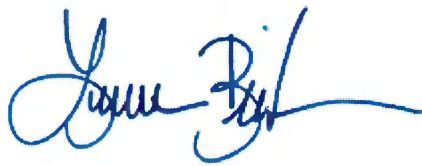
Phil Schi AD40

W. Foy AD49

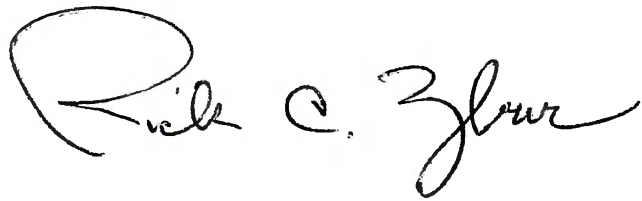
Rep. [Signature] AD49

John A. [Signature] AD69

Letter to Governor Newsom, pro Tem McGuire, and Speaker Rivas
August 26, 2025



LAURA RICHARDSON
35th Senate District



RICK CHAVEZ ZBUR
51st Assembly District



CELESTE RODRIGUEZ
43rd Assembly District



California Legislature

September 2, 2025

The Honorable Mike McGuire
Senate pro Tem
1021 O Street, Ste. 8518
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Robert Rivas
Speaker of the Assembly
1021 O Street, Ste. 8330
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Monique Limón
Chair, Senate Climate Working Group
1021 O Street, Ste. 7610
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Jacqui Irwin
Chair, Assembly Cap & Trade Working Group
1021 O Street, Ste. 5630
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Gavin Newsom
Governor of California
1021 O Street, Ste. 9000
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Reauthorize Cap and Invest with Bookend Investments for the Bay Area

Dear Governor Newsom, Speaker Rivas, pro Tem McGuire, Chair Limón, and Chair Irwin,

As State Senators and Assemblymembers representing the Bay Area, we strongly support reauthorizing California's Cap and Invest program through at least 2045 and respectfully request \$2.2 billion annually for key Bay Area bookend projects. This program is one of the state's most effective tools to cut greenhouse gas emissions while funding the transportation and housing infrastructure that underpins California's climate, equity, and economic goals.

A long-term extension will provide certainty, stability, and momentum for transformative investments. However, California High-Speed Rail's (HSR) transformation hinges on having modern infrastructure and seamless connections into the Bay Area and the Los Angeles metropolitan region, the state's largest populations and job centers. We support advancing critical bookend projects that will deliver immediate benefits and ensure the Bay Area is ready when high-speed trains arrive. These projects include San José's Diridon Station, The Portal in San Francisco, grade separations and safety improvements along the Caltrain corridor, and electrification from Gilroy to San José.

With construction advancing in the Central Valley, now is the moment to augment or set aside a portion of cap and invest funds for bookend investments for bookend investments. Investing in these bookend projects is a win-win: they strengthen today's regional rail systems, reduce

greenhouse gas emissions, cut congestion, and improve air quality while laying the foundation for high-speed service.

These projects also create jobs, increase ridership, leverage federal, regional, and local resources, and reduce costs through concurrent delivery with construction in the Central Valley. Because they require years of planning and construction, delay would jeopardize long-term readiness. California can maximize community benefits and ensure the Bay Area is fully prepared for HSR.

We strongly urge you to reauthorize Cap and Invest and include allocations for HSR bookend projects. California cannot meet its full mobility potential and deliver on the promise of HSR without robust bookend investments in the Bay Area. We need to go full steam ahead on these investments to unlock HSR's potential and connect California's social and economic engines.

Sincerely,



Dave Cortese
State Senate, District 15



Ash Kalra
State Assembly, District 25



Josh Becker
State Senate, District 13



Gail Pellerin,
State Assembly, District 28



Scott Wiener
State Senate, District 11



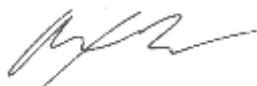
Matt Haney
State Assembly, District 17



Marc Berman
State Assembly, District 23



Catherine Stefanie
State Assembly, District 19



Alex Lee
State Assembly, District 24

cc. Governor Gavin Newsom,
California Transportation Commissioners,
James Hacker, Undersecretary of the California State Transportation Agency,
Dina El-Tawansy, Director of California Department of Transportation,
Myles White, Governor's Office



Secretary Omishakin Launches California Sustainable Communities Task Force

Published: Aug 26, 2025

SACRAMENTO, Calif. — In a bold move to accelerate climate action solutions, California Transportation Secretary (CalSTA) Toks Omishakin today announced the California Sustainable Communities Task Force (SCTF) – a cross-sector coalition tasked with catalyzing the implementation of California’s climate, housing, equity and transportation goals. Bringing together leaders from every corner of California, the task force will focus on urgent coordinated strategies to deliver on the promise of sustainable, thriving communities.

Inclusive, cross-sector participation on the task force includes leaders from state and regional agencies, local governments, transit providers, community-based organizations, housing and environmental advocates, academic institutions and rural and underserved community voices to shape a comprehensive report of policy recommendations. The task force will develop a set of policy recommendations focused on empowering regions throughout California to reduce emissions, align transportation and land use outcomes and further transition California from planning to action on regional Sustainable Communities Strategies.

“This task force is about turning urgency into action,” said Secretary Omishakin. “With Governor Gavin Newsom’s bold climate vision guiding us, California is committed to delivering real, measurable progress. By uniting experts and communities from across the state, California is building practical, scalable solutions that will continue to drive sustainable and inclusive growth.”

Secretary Omishakin has appointed the following members to participate on the Task Force:

- Aaron Hake, Executive Director of Riverside County Transportation Commission
- Alison Hughes, Chief Consultant of California Senate Housing Committee
- Antoinette Meier, Senior Director of Regional Planning of San Diego Council of Governments
- Colin Parent, Chief Executive Officer and General Counsel of Circulate San Diego
- Dan Dunmoyer, President and Chief Executive Officer of California Building Industry Association

- Eric Will, Policy Advocate of Rural County Representatives of California
- Hana Creger, Associate Director of Climate Equity of The Greenlining Institute
- James Corless, Executive Director of Sacramento Associated Council of Government
- Jeanie Ward-Waller, Interim Executive Director of ClimatePlan
- Julia Kingsley, Consultant of California Assembly Transportation Committee
- Julie Lo, Deputy Director of Programs of Housing California
- Kate Gordon, Chief Executive Officer of California Forward
- Kiana Valentine, Executive Director of Transportation California
- Commissioner Lee Ann Eager, California Transportation Commission
- Lisa Engel, Chief Consultant of California Assembly Housing Committee Consultant
- Liz O'Donoghue, Resilient Communities Strategy Director of The Nature Conservancy
- Mariela Ruacho, Senior Director of American Lung Association
- Matt Maloney, Metro Planning & Policy Deputy Executive Director of Metropolitan Transportation Commission
- Mark Neuburger, Housing, Land Use & Transportation Legislative Advocate of California State Association of Counties
- Maura Twomey, Executive Director of Association of Monterey Bay Area Governments
- Melissa White, Principal Consultant for the California Senate Transportation Committee
- Michael Pimentel, Executive Director of California Transit Association
- Sabrina Bradbury, Deputy Director of CALCOG
- Sarah Jepson, Chief Planning Officer of Southern California Association of Governments
- Sean Tiedgan, Executive Director of Shasta Regional Transportation Agency
- Sujata Srivastava, Chief of Policy of SPUR
- Dr. Susan Shaheen, Board Member of California Air Resources Board
- Susanna Reyes, Sustainability Policy Director of LA Metro
- Ted Smalley, Executive Director of Tulare County Association of Governments
- Zak Accuardi, Director of Mobility Choices, Climate and Energy of Natural Resources Defense Council

Additionally, representatives from Caltrans, the California Transportation Commission, California Air Resources Board, Department of Housing and Community Development, the Governor's Office of Land Use & Climate Innovation and the California Strategic Growth Council will work collaboratively with CalSTA to participate in and support SCTF. The Task Force will also be supported by expert researchers and academics

from UC Davis Institute of Transportation Studies and consultant Egon Terplan.

Advancing State Climate and Equity Goals

The creation of the California Sustainable Communities Task Force builds on over a decade of climate planning, including the passage of Senate Bill 375 (Steinberg, 2008) and the California Air Resources Board's 2022 Scoping Plan, which outlines the state's roadmap to carbon neutrality by 2045.

Key areas of exploration will include:

- Sustainable transportation investments and land use planning
- Transportation system management and pricing strategies
- Climate resilience and adaptation
- Funding and authority needed for regional implementation
- Updated success metrics and modeling approaches

"The Sustainable Communities Task Force is a powerful opportunity to bridge policy and practice," said California Air Resources Board Chair Liane Randolph. "By bringing together diverse voices and aligning our climate, housing and transportation strategies, we can deliver real benefits to communities across California."

The task force will produce a final report in November 2026 with recommendations for legislative, regulatory and budgetary actions to support implementation of Sustainable Communities Strategies and meet statewide greenhouse gas and vehicle miles traveled reduction goals.

For information on the California Sustainable Communities Task Force, visit CalSTA's calsta.ca.gov/newsroom.



September 18, 2025

To: Legislative and Communications Committee

From: Darrell E. Johnson, Chief Executive Officer

Subject: Federal Legislative Status Report

Overview

The Orange County Transportation Authority regularly updates the Legislative and Communications Committee on policy and regulatory issues directly impacting the agency's programs, projects, and operations. This status report includes information on the House and Senate fiscal year 2026 Transportation, Housing, and Urban Development appropriations bill, an update on the proposal to repeal the 2009 Greenhouse Gas Endangerment Finding, recent executive orders, a letter from Members of Congress related to bus purchase prices, and an update pertaining to federal actions related to the California High-Speed Rail Authority. Overviews are provided on a Senate Environment and Public Works Committee hearing and a House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee hearing.

Recommendation

Receive and file as an information item.

Discussion

Fiscal Year 2026 House Appropriations Update

On July 17, 2025, the House of Representatives (House) Appropriations Transportation, Housing, and Urban Development (THUD) Subcommittee, by a vote of 35-28, approved the fiscal year (FY) 2026 THUD appropriations bill. The bill set annual discretionary and supplemental funding levels for the Department of Transportation (DOT). The House FY 2026 THUD bill proposes a total discretionary allocation of \$89 billion, nearly five percent below the FY 2025 enacted level. Additionally, the House THUD bill provides a discretionary total of about \$90 billion, prioritizing air traffic control infrastructure and transportation safety.

Under the House THUD bill, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) would receive \$64.4 billion, which is nearly \$2 billion above the FY 2025 enacted level. This includes \$954 million for 464 highway projects identified through member requests, known as Community Project Funding (CPF) or earmarks. By comparison, the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) would receive a total of \$14.9 billion, marking a \$1.8 billion decrease from the previous FY. It should be noted that consistent with the Infrastructure Investments and Jobs Act (IIJA), contract authority remains steady for the FTA. While only \$54 million in new discretionary funding is provided for the Capital Investment Grants (CIG) Program, the bill utilizes carryover funds from FY 2025 and \$1.6 billion in IIJA advance appropriations to support every transit capital project ready to proceed in 2026. It should be noted that the House THUD bill does not provide additional discretionary funding over authorized amounts for several competitive grant programs, such as the Low or No Emission and Buses and Bus Facilities program.

The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) receives \$3.1 billion, which is \$198 million above the FY 2025 enacted level. This includes \$2.3 billion for Amtrak, split between the Northeast Corridor and the National Network, and \$538 million for the Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements Program with a portion reserved for community-designated projects. The proposal also transfers \$1.4 billion from Federal-State Partnership (FSP) to the Amtrak National Network and \$925 million from the FSP to the Amtrak Northeast Corridor.

Beyond funding levels, the House bill includes a comprehensive suite of transportation policy directives in its report language that signal congressional intent across a broad range of technical, regulatory, and equity-related issues.

Among the notable directives:

- The DOT is to accelerate the use of digital project delivery tools across federally funded projects, enhancing efficiency and cost-effectiveness.
- The Buy America, Build America provisions receive renewed focus, with direction to the FHWA to issue clearer, more standardized guidance to reduce administrative burdens on state and local agencies.
- A call for a national Vehicle Miles Traveled pilot program, signaling renewed interest in mileage-based user fee structures as a future alternative to the gas tax.
- The FHWA is encouraged to continue supporting Vision Zero programs, pedestrian safety, and Safe Routes to School initiatives through interagency coordination.

- The reduction of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions as a performance measure is explicitly restricted, reinforcing earlier congressional opposition to rulemaking in this area.
- A moratorium on equity-related initiatives, prohibiting the use of DOT grant funding in alignment with the 2022 DOT Equity Action Plan.
- The DOT is prohibited from using federal funds to adopt technologies such as foreign-manufactured Light Detection and Ranging systems, citing national security concerns.
- The DOT must also assess cybersecurity vulnerabilities in electric vehicles and prepare a report outlining mitigation strategies.

In addition to the directives outlined above, the full committee report accompanying the House FY 2026 THUD bill includes two notable general provisions. First, there is language that prohibits the DOT from providing any federal funds to the State of California for the California High-Speed Rail project or any substantially similar initiative, citing ongoing concerns with the project's cost, timeline, and scope. Second, there is a provision barring the use of funds to propose, implement, or enforce mask mandates for public transportation or transportation hubs in response to the coronavirus public health emergency.

Included in the House THUD appropriations bill is \$3.73 billion in CPFs for transportation and housing-related projects. It should be noted that these are not finalized and are subject to continued negotiations. However, those requested by the Orange County Transportation Authority (OCTA) are included as follows:

- \$1.7 million for the Interstate 5 (I-5) Improvement Project (Interstate 405 to State Route 55 [SR-55]) - submitted by Representative Young Kim (R-Fullerton).
- \$3 million for the SR- 55 Improvement Project (I-5 to State Route 91) - submitted by Representative Kim.
- \$850,000 for the I-5 Improvement Project (Avenida Pico to County Line) - submitted by Representative Mike Levin (D-Dana Point).
- \$250,000 for Technology and Signal Upgrades – submitted by Representative Dave Min (D-Irvine).

This list does not include other projects that were submitted within Orange County, which were requested by individual cities, the County, or other transportation agencies such as Metrolink. Although a project may be included at this time, this does not guarantee that the project will receive funding in the final FY 2026 appropriations bill. Staff will continue to work with delegation

members throughout the appropriations process and will provide updates to the OCTA Board of Directors.

Fiscal Year 2026 Senate Appropriations Update

On July 24, 2025, the Senate Appropriations Committee, by a vote of 27-1, approved its FY 2026 THUD appropriations bill. The bill appropriates a total of \$26.5 billion in discretionary funding for the DOT, about \$1.3 billion above the FY 2025 enacted level, and utilizes a combination of new appropriations and IIJA advance appropriations to fund key federal transportation programs. The Senate THUD bill includes \$63 billion for the FHWA, a \$129 million increase from the FY 2025 enacted level, along with approximately \$17 billion for the FTA, approximately the same as the FY 2025 enacted level. It also provides \$2.9 billion for the FRA, a decrease of about \$700 million from the FY 2025 enacted level. The Senate THUD bill differs in its approach from the House THUD bill with a greater emphasis on funding for public transportation, system accessibility, operational safety, and readiness for major international events. It also continues to provide new discretionary funding for several competitive grant programs, such as the Low or No Emission and Buses and Bus Facilities programs, that the House bill does not fund beyond previously authorized IIJA levels. In addition, the Committee limited the number of congressionally directed spending requests included in the bill, resulting in fewer earmarked transportation projects than in previous years, especially for California. The Senate bill does not include the policy restrictions contained in the House version of the bill.

The Senate THUD bill includes funding provisions across several areas of transportation, including capital transit programs, safety initiatives, planning for major international events, and coordination with housing-related policies. It also includes limited funding for operational support at large transit agencies. Of note:

- \$3.5 billion is provided for the CIG Program, including \$1.9 billion in FY 2026 appropriations and \$1.6 billion in IIJA advance appropriations.
- \$1.1 billion is provided for the Buses and Bus Facilities Program, continuing support for transit agencies to replace aging fleets and upgrade related infrastructure, particularly in areas with high ridership demand and low vehicle availability.
- \$1.05 billion is included for the Low or No Emission Discretionary Grant Program, which supports transit agencies in acquiring zero-emission buses and charging or fueling infrastructure, contributing to system modernization and environmental goals.
- \$950 million is provided for the State of Good Repair Grants Program to support maintenance and reinvestment in older transit systems with high-capacity usage.

The Senate bill also provides \$20 million in operating assistance for transit safety, provided through a Transit Infrastructure Grant earmark that would be distributed via formula. This proposal would allow the ten largest transit agencies by ridership, which does not include OCTA, to use federal funds for the salaries and contracts of police officers, security personnel, and crisis intervention specialists. This represents a shift toward acknowledging public safety as a critical component of transit service restoration and passenger confidence.

The Senate bill also dedicates funding to ensure transportation readiness for upcoming international events. Specifically:

- \$78.1 million is included to support transit operations during the 2026 Fédération Internationale de Football Association World Cup, which will be hosted across 11 United States (U.S.) cities over 39 days. This funding is intended to help agencies plan and deliver enhanced service, employ additional personnel, and strengthen transit security.
- \$68 million is provided for the 2028 Olympic and Paralympic Games in Los Angeles (Games), to support a supplemental regional bus system, implement traffic surveillance and management systems, and establish dedicated transit lanes serving Games venues.

Update on Proposal to Repeal the 2009 GHG Emission Endangerment Finding

On Tuesday July 29, 2025, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Administrator Lee Zeldin announced that the agency would formally repeal the “Endangerment and Cause or Contribute Finding for Greenhouse Gases Under Section 202(a) of the Clean Air Act” (Endangerment Finding). The proposed repeal was published in the Federal Register on August 1, 2025, and is open for public comment through September 15, 2025, with hearings held throughout August.

The Endangerment Finding, issued under the Obama administration, concluded that six GHGs, including carbon dioxide, methane, and nitrous oxide, endanger public health and welfare due to their role in climate change. It provided the legal basis for a range of federal climate regulations, including vehicle emission standards, power plant carbon dioxide limits, and methane controls. This determination followed the 2007 Supreme Court ruling in *Massachusetts v. Environmental Protection Agency*, which required the agency to assess whether GHGs qualify as air pollutants under the Clean Air Act.

The EPA maintains that the Clean Air Act does not authorize the agency to regulate GHG emissions to address global climate change, asserting that the statute is limited to pollutants with local or regional impacts. The agency also claims that the Endangerment Finding misapplied the scientific record, and that the economic costs of regulation may outweigh the projected climate benefits.

Repealing the Endangerment Finding would mark a significant shift in federal environmental and transportation policy. It could lead to legal challenges regarding the EPA's authority to regulate GHG emissions, and raise questions about state rights, particularly California's authority to set its own vehicle emission standards under a federal waiver. This would have implications for states that follow California's standards, representing more than one-third of the national vehicle market.

For transportation agencies, the repeal may influence vehicle emissions requirements, funding programs tied to climate metrics, and long-term procurement and planning strategies, especially in jurisdictions pursuing independent climate goals. Staff will continue to monitor the proposed repeal and evaluate its potential impacts on regulatory compliance, funding opportunities, and agency operations.

Congressional Request for Government Accountability Office Review of Transit Bus Manufacturing Costs

On August 7, 2025, Representatives Rick Larsen (D-WA), Maxwell Frost (D-FL), and Mike Turner (R-OH), sent a letter to Comptroller General Gene L. Dodaro at the Government Accountability Office (GAO) requesting a comprehensive study on transit bus manufacturing and procurement. The letter is included in Attachment A and explains that millions of Americans depend on public transit and that federal programs such as the Low or No Emission Grant Program and the Buses and Bus Facilities Grant Program, administered by the FTA, provide critical support to transit agencies in purchasing buses. The members express concern that the high cost of manufacturing transit buses in the U.S. is creating significant challenges for transit agencies and the communities they serve. They reference a November 2024 GAO report showing that supply chain and manufacturing issues have been delaying bus acquisitions and driving up costs. The request asks the GAO to investigate the main factors influencing the cost of transit buses, compare these costs to those in other countries, examine how manufacturing and supply chain challenges affect federally funded procurements, and review the actions taken by federal, state, local, and industry stakeholders to reduce costs and improve delivery timelines.

Recent Executive Orders

On August 5, 2025, the President issued Executive Order (EO) 14328, entitled "Establishing the White House Task Force on the 2028 Summer Olympics". The EO creates a coordinated federal structure to assist in planning, organizing, and executing activities related to the Games in the U.S.

The task force will be chaired by the President and vice-chaired by the Vice President, with membership including the heads of key federal departments and agencies. It will be housed administratively within the Department of Homeland Security and will coordinate interagency efforts related to security,

transportation, border management, visa processing, and operational readiness for the Games. The task force will also identify and address potential legal, logistical, or regulatory barriers that could affect federal support.

Agency members are required to submit planning and activity reports to the task force by October 1, 2025. The task force is scheduled to terminate on December 31, 2028, unless extended by the President. OCTA staff will be monitoring for further details.

On August 7, 2025, the President issued EO 14332, "Improving Oversight of Federal Grantmaking." The EO establishes new requirements for federal agencies in managing discretionary grants and funding opportunities. Agencies must appoint a senior political appointee to review and approve all funding opportunity announcements before release. All funding announcements must be written in plain language, and agencies are required to coordinate with one another to avoid duplication.

The EO also directs the Office of Management and Budget to revise federal guidance so that all discretionary grant agreements include termination-for-convenience clauses, allowing agencies to end grants when they no longer align with federal priorities. Agencies are instructed to amend existing agreements to include these provisions where legally permissible. In addition, grantees may face restrictions on drawing down funds without prior justification and authorization.

Finally, the EO prohibits the use of federal grant funds for activities such as racial preference programs, initiatives denying biological sex differences, and other categories defined as inconsistent with national priorities.

Marc Molinaro Confirmed as Administrator of the Federal Transit Administration

Marc Molinaro was confirmed by the U.S. Senate as the 16th Administrator of the FTA on August 2, 2025, by a vote of 71-23. He will officially assume leadership of the agency as of August 4, 2025. Molinaro brings a background in both federal and local government, having served as a U.S. Representative for New York's 19th congressional district and previously as Dutchess County Executive. He began his public service career as Mayor of Tivoli, New York at the age of 19, one of the youngest in U.S. history.

During his confirmation hearing in March, Molinaro emphasized his commitment to continuing the FTA's core mission of distributing federal transit funding effectively, particularly under the IIJA. He pledged to ensure the agency remains focused on safety, accessibility, and efficient grant management. Molinaro also highlighted the importance of protecting the FTA's professional workforce and supporting both urban and rural transit agencies in navigating federal funding requirements.

His confirmation was supported by a range of transit stakeholders, including the American Public Transportation Association, the Transport Workers Union, and the American Bus Association.

Updates Related to the California High-Speed Rail Authority

On August 19, 2025, Chairman James Comer (R-KY), Chairman of the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (Committee), sent a letter to DOT Secretary Sean Duffy explaining that the Committee is opening an investigation into whether the California High-Speed Rail Authority (CHSRA) knowingly misrepresented ridership and financial forecasts to secure federal and state funding.

The Committee's request to DOT is broad in scope. It asks for all documents and communications from CHSRA, other California government entities, or third parties that were submitted to DOT to solicit or obtain state or federal funding for the CHSRA project. In addition, it seeks all documents and communications within the DOT analyzing the project's development and long-term viability, including but not limited to ridership projections, property acquisition, environmental reviews, and contracting.

This development comes on the heels of Secretary Duffy's rescission of federal funding for the CHSRA project. Specifically, in July 2025, Secretary Duffy announced the termination of approximately \$4 billion in unspent federal funding for the CHSRA project. The decision followed a compliance review by the FRA that concluded the CHSRA had not met grant requirements and did not present a viable delivery path for the project. The State of California has since challenged the action in federal court.

In late August 2025, the DOT withdrew an additional \$175 million in federal funding. This action affected several components of the CHSRA project, including the Le Grand Overcrossing on the Merced Extension, the planned Madera High-Speed Rail Station, the Downtown Extension Project in San Francisco, and grade separations in southern San Jose. Secretary Duffy described these project elements as unrealistic and cited inefficiency and lack of progress as the basis for the withdrawal.

House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee Hearing on DOT Budget Request

On July 16, 2025, the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee held a hearing entitled, *"Oversight of the Department of Transportation's Policies and Programs and Fiscal Year 2026 Budget Request"* with Secretary Duffy. The hearing reviewed the DOT's policy direction, project delivery delays, and grant management practices as lawmakers look ahead to the reauthorization of surface transportation programs before the IIJA expires in 2026.

Chairman Sam Graves (R-MO) emphasized the need for streamlined permitting and reduced administrative burdens, while Ranking Member Rick Larsen called on the DOT to expedite the processing of more than 1,300 pending grant agreements. Secretary Duffy stated that the DOT had advanced over a third of those grants and expected to clear the rest by early fall. He highlighted goals to increase permitting efficiency, modernize infrastructure systems, and provide states with more flexibility.

Lawmakers from both parties raised concerns about changes to discretionary grant criteria, potential rescissions of previously awarded funds, and proposed cuts to programs like electric vehicle charging. Representative Val Hoyle (D-OR) and Representative Valerie Foushee (D-NC) questioned the consistency in honoring prior funding decisions, while Representative Eric Crawford (R-AR) welcomed new investment in truck parking. Representatives Vince Fong (R-CA) and Doug LaMalfa (D-CA) both praised the DOT's decision to cancel previously awarded funding for the California High-Speed Rail project, describing it as a responsible move to redirect funds from what he called a costly and ineffective project.

While views diverged on issues such as transit equity, safety metrics, and regulatory reform, members across the aisle underscored the need to improve infrastructure delivery, funding predictability, and oversight. The hearing reflected the ongoing debate over how to balance flexibility and accountability as Congress prepares for the next surface transportation authorization.

Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works Hearing on Surface Transportation Reauthorization

On July 16, 2025, the Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works held a hearing titled *"Constructing the Surface Transportation Reauthorization Bill: Stakeholders' Perspectives"* to further construct the reauthorization bill with stakeholder's perspectives. Chairman Capito (R-WV) opened the hearing with her surface transportation reauthorization bill priorities which included improving safety and reliability of surface transportation networks, reforming and modernization of federal programs and policies, and addressing the variety of surface transportation needs through all states by giving states funding flexibility.

Witnesses emphasized the importance of strengthening direct federal investment in local governments to better address the unique needs of cities and communities across the country. Several speakers highlighted the value of grant programs that enable innovative local projects, particularly those advancing resilience and sustainability. Others stressed the need for greater flexibility in how states can deploy federal funds, encouraging Congress to streamline processes, reduce duplicative requirements, and consider reforms that would allow resources to be allocated where they are most needed. A recurring theme was the call for funding structures that take into account not only population, but

also economic and regional factors, ensuring a more equitable and effective distribution of resources nationwide

Furthermore, Senator Padilla (D-CA) referenced Arizona's recent hosting of the Super Bowl and asked how the federal government can better support transportation needs to accommodate increased ridership for major sporting events. Mayor Gallego stated that the City of Phoenix's partnership with the federal government is what made their transportation successful, the use of the Skills and Training to Achieve Readiness for Tomorrow Program was able to expand the transportation system in Phoenix, expand the Phoenix Airport tarmac, and acquire new and loaned busses. She then suggested looking at funding that can be applied during peak ridership usage not just regular transit use.

Overall, the hearing revolved around discussions of flexible funding methods, permitting reform, and what should be prioritized and included in the upcoming surface transportation reauthorization bill.

Summary

An update is provided on the federal appropriations process, an effort to repeal the 2009 Greenhouse Gas Endangerment Finding, two executive orders, a study on bus prices, and the California High-Speed Rail Authority. Overviews are provided on two hearings.

Attachments

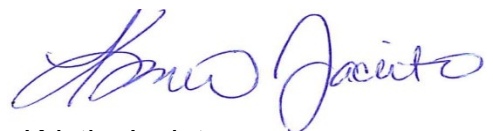
- A. Letter from the Honorable Rick Larsen, Ranking Member, House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, the Honorable Maxwell Frost, Representative, House of Representatives, and the Honorable Michael Turner, Representative, House of Representatives, to the Honorable Gene L. Dodaro, Comptroller General, U.S. Government Accountability Office, dated August 7, 2025
- B. Letter from the Honorable James Comer, Chairman, House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, to the Honorable Sean Duffy, Secretary, U.S. Department of Transportation, dated August 19, 2025
- C. Potomac Partners DC, Monthly Legislative Report – July 2025
- D. Potomac Partners DC, Monthly Legislative Report – August 2025

Prepared by:



Alexis Carter
Senior Government Relations Representative,
Government Relations
(714) 560-5475

Approved by:



Kristin Jacinto
Executive Director,
Government Relations
(714) 560-5754

Congress of the United States

U.S. House of Representatives

August 7, 2025

The Honorable Gene L. Dodaro
Comptroller General
U.S. Government Accountability Office
441 G St., NW
Washington, DC 20548

Dear Mr. Dodaro:

Millions of Americans rely on public transit to live their daily lives and satisfy their basic needs and obligations. In recognition of this widespread need, the Department of Transportation's Federal Transit Administration (FTA) provides funding—such as through the Low or No Emission Grant Program and the Buses and Bus Facilities Grant Programs—to help transit agencies purchase buses, and for related purposes.

High transit bus manufacturing and procurement costs in the United States present unique challenges to the Americans who rely on public transportation. These costs disproportionately affect local transit agencies providing essential transportation services to our constituents. In November 2024, GAO reported that FTA has stated that bus and supply chain issues will delay the acquisition of new buses and increase the cost of new buses and related equipment.¹ In response, the agency has efforts underway to help address this challenge, including incentives to help contain bus costs and encouraging advance and progress payments on bus orders.

To help promote the efficient use of Federal, State, and local funds in procuring new buses for transit service, we are requesting that the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) conduct a study that examines the following questions:

- 1) What are the primary cost drivers in the design and procurement process for transit buses in the United States?
- 2) How do the costs to design, manufacture, and procure transit buses in the United States compare to such costs in other countries, and how have increases in transit bus costs compared to changes in the prices of medium-duty vehicles, school buses, and other commercial vehicles?
- 3) How have bus manufacturing and supplier challenges affected bus procurements funded by the Federal Transit Administration?

¹GAO, *Transit Workforce Development: Actions to Support Transition to Zero-Emission Buses*, GAO-25-106921 (Washington, D.C.: Nov. 18, 2024).

- 4) What steps have the Federal Transit Administration, States, transit agencies, manufacturers, and industry stakeholders taken to reduce bus costs and accelerate delivery timeframes?

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Rick Larsen
Ranking Member
Committee on Transportation
and Infrastructure



Maxwell Frost
Member of Congress



Michael Turner
Member of Congress

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

ATTACHMENT B

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM
2157 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6143
MAJORITY (202) 225-5074
MINORITY (202) 225-5051
<https://oversight.house.gov>

August 19, 2025

The Honorable Sean Duffy
Secretary
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Ave., SE
Washington, D.C. 20590

Dear Secretary Duffy:

The Committee on Oversight and Government Reform is investigating federal funding sent to the California High-Speed Rail Authority (CHSRA or Authority). As part of our investigation, we are seeking to understand whether the Authority knowingly misrepresented the ridership projections and the associated financial viability of the California High-Speed Rail Project (CHSR Project) to secure federal and state funds. In 2008, Californians approved \$9.95 billion dollars of state bond funding to build an 800-mile high-speed rail network connecting Los Angeles, San Francisco, and the Central Valley to coastal cities with a completion date of 2020 and a cost of \$33 billion.¹ To date, not one route is complete and the CHSRA Project is facing financial collapse,² but now CHSRA is claiming they will begin service in Central Valley in 2032.³ Current cost estimates range from \$89 billion to \$128 billion.⁴ Despite this, the Biden Administration committed roughly \$4 billion in federal taxpayer dollars to the CHSR Project,⁵ including almost \$89.65 million dollars in the closing days of the Administration.⁶ The Committee requests a staff-level briefing, documents, and communications related to CHSRA.

¹ Lee Ohanian, *California's High-Speed Rail Was A Fantasy From Its Inception*, THE HOOVER INST. (Mar. 8, 2023) [hereinafter Hoover Inst.]; Newsroom, U.S. Dep't of Transp., U.S. Transp. Sec. Duffy Announces Review of California High-Speed Rail Project (Feb. 20, 2025) [hereinafter DOT Press Release], *available at* <https://www.transportation.gov/briefing-room/us-transportation-secretary-duffy-announces-review-california-high-speed-rail-project>.

² Josh Christenson, *California got nearly \$7B from feds for high-speed rail – but never laid any track, bombshell report shows*, NEW YORK POST (June 4, 2025).

³ Erik Galicia, *High-speed rail passenger service could start in Central Valley before 2033*, THE FRESNO BEE, (Aug. 18, 2025).

⁴ Maxwell Adler, *Trump Targets \$128 Billion California High-Speed Rail Project*, BLOOMBERG (Feb. 20, 2025); DOT Press Release, *supra* note 1 (“[t]oday, the Merced-to-Bakersfield segment alone would cost more than the original total. The latest estimate for San Francisco to Los Angeles is \$106 billion — more than three times the original cost estimate.”).

⁵ DOT Press Release, *supra* note 1.

⁶ California High-Speed Rail Auth., *Federal Grants*, *available at* <https://hsr.ca.gov/about/funding/federal-grants/>.

The CHSR Project has been characterized as “perhaps the greatest infrastructure failure in the history of the country.”⁷ Since the CHSR Project’s inception, transit experts have warned that the ridership and revenue projections were “inaccurate, misleading and in violation of the laws guiding the project.”⁸ Ridership forecasts are critical because “if the revenue from passengers is less than projected, there is a greater imperative for operating subsidies.”⁹ A 2008 report stated, “CHSRA 2030 ridership projections are absurdly high—so much so that they could well rank among the most unrealistic projections produced for a major transport project anywhere in the world.”¹⁰ A 2010 report from the Institute for Transportation Studies at the University of California at Berkeley questioned the validity of the ridership’s modeling, stating that “we have found some significant problems that render the key demand forecasting models unreliable for policy analysis.”¹¹

On June 4, 2025, the U.S. Department of Transportation’s (DOT) Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) issued a Compliance Review Report outlining CHSRA’s “years of mismanagement, broken promises, and wasted federal taxpayer dollars.”¹² Following this comprehensive review, on July 16, 2025, Secretary of Transportation Sean Duffy announced the FRA “terminated approximately \$4 billion in unspent federal funding for California’s High Speed Rail Boondoggle.”¹³ The Authority’s apparent repeated use of misleading ridership projections, despite longstanding warnings from experts, raises serious questions about whether funds were allocated under false pretenses. Despite the massive cost overruns and lack of progress, CHSRA sued the FRA to prevent the termination of these funds, and the litigation is ongoing.¹⁴

The Committee requests a staff-level briefing as soon as possible, but no later than September 2, 2025, to better understand the allocation of taxpayer dollars. We also request the following documents and information, covering the time period January 1, 1995 to the present unless otherwise indicated, as soon as possible, but no later than September 2, 2025:

⁷ The Hoover Inst., *supra* note 1.

⁸ REASON FOUND., POLICY STUDY 415, CALIFORNIA HIGH SPEED RAIL: AN UPDATED DUE DILIGENCE REP. (Apr. 2013).

⁹ Wendell Cox, *California High-Speed Rail, Still Stuck at the Station*, UNLEASH PROSPERITY, at 9 (Apr. 2025).

¹⁰ Wendell Cox *et al.*, REASON FOUND., THE CALIFORNIA HIGH SPEED RAIL PROPOSAL: A DUE DILIGENCE REP., EXECUTIVE SUMMARY, RIDERSHIP PROJECTIONS (Sept. 2008), *available at* https://reason.org/wp-content/uploads/files/california_high_speed_rail_report.pdf.

¹¹ David Brownstone *et al.*, FINAL REP., INST. OF TRANSP. STUDIES, UNIV. OF CALIFORNIA, REVIEW OF ‘BAY AREA/CALIFORNIA HIGH-SPEED RAIL RIDERSHIP AND REVENUE FORECASTING STUDY’, at 2 (June 30, 2010).

¹² U.S. Dep’t Transp., Newsroom, Trump’s Transp. Secretary Sean P. Duffy Releases Report Exposing No Viable Path Forward for California’s High-Speed Rail Boondoggle (June 4, 2025), *available at* <https://www.transportation.gov/briefing-room/trumps-transportation-secretary-sean-p-duffy-releases-report-exposing-no-viable-path>.

¹³ Newsroom, U.S. Dep’t of Transp., Trump’s Transportation Secretary Sean P. Duffy Pulls the Plug on \$4B for California High Speed Rail’s Train to Nowhere (July 16, 2025).

¹⁴ Theo Burman, *California High-Speed Rail Protects \$4B in Federal Funding Amid Lawsuit*, NEWSWEEK, (Aug. 14, 2025).

The Honorable Sean Duffy

August 19, 2025

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1. All documents and communications from the California High-Speed Rail Authority, as well as any other California government entity or third party, submitted to the U.S. Department of Transportation to solicit or procure state and federal taxpayer funds for the CHSRA Project;
2. All documents and communications within the Department of Transportation analyzing the development and sustained viability of the project (including but not limited to ridership projections, acquisition of real property, environmental reviews, and contracting).

The Committee on Oversight and Government Reform is the principal oversight committee of the U.S. House of Representatives and has broad authority to investigate “any matter” at “any time” under House Rule X. To schedule the briefing and to arrange for the delivery of documents, please contact the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform Majority staff at (202) 225-5074. Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "James Comer". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath the name.

James Comer

Chairman

Committee on Oversight and Government Reform

cc: The Honorable Robert Garcia, Ranking Member
Committee on Oversight and Government Reform



Monthly Legislative Report – July 2025

Advocacy Meetings

Office of Chairman Sam Graves (R-MO) – We met with Chairman Graves' Chief of Staff, now serving as the staff director of the House Transportation and Infrastructure (T&I) Committee, to brief him on Orange County Transportation Authority's (OCTA) priorities for restoring local suballocation authority for Surface Transportation Block Grant (STBG) and Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement (CMAQ) programs. We also discussed the potential opportunity to reallocate California High-Speed Rail funding to support other critical transportation needs in the state.

T&I Subcommittee on Highways and Transit Chair David Rouzer (R-NC) – We spoke several times this month with Congressman Rouzer's Chief of Staff to prepare for the Chairman's upcoming visit to Orange County in August. We briefed Chairman Rouzer on OCTA's surface transportation reauthorization principles, highlighting the agency's priorities around project delivery, funding flexibility, and regional infrastructure needs. We also coordinated plans for the visit, including opportunities for the Chairman to tour key transportation projects in Orange County and see firsthand how federal programs are supporting local infrastructure.

Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Office of Policy and Government Affairs – We followed up on FHWA's recent solicitation of stakeholder input regarding potential reauthorization principles, and we shared OCTA's proposed language for suballocation authority for STBG and CMAQ funds to ensure our priorities are reflected in their communications with Congress. We also emphasized the importance of recognizing self-help counties in future formula funding frameworks. FHWA staff welcomed continued engagement as their internal policy development moves forward.

Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) Senior Advisor – We followed up with the FRA Senior Advisor to discuss the OCTA's request to adjust the federal cost share for its Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements (CRISI) grant supporting the Los Angeles – San Diego – San Luis Obispo (LOSSAN) Rail Corridor. In addition, we followed up on the potential reallocation of California High-Speed Rail funding.

Office of Senator Padilla (D-CA) – We met virtually with Senator Padilla's new transportation legislative assistant to provide an overview of OCTA's federal priorities. The discussion covered OCTA's rail and express lanes programs, our principles for the upcoming surface transportation reauthorization to include the importance of reinstating local suballocation authority for the STBG and CMAQ programs. We also shared the June 26 letter from Orange County congressional members supporting this legislative fix. The meeting provided an opportunity to brief the Senator's office on OCTA's ongoing work along the LOSSAN Corridor and our broader regional infrastructure needs.

Office of Congressman Lou Correa (D-CA) – We met with Congressman Correa’s staff to follow up on OCTA’s appropriations requests and discuss our surface transportation reauthorization principles. We also reviewed funding needs related to the FY26 Appropriations bill for Olympics-related transportation funding.

Office of Congressman David Min (D-CA) – We met with Congressman Min’s staff to follow up on OCTA’s FY26 Community Project Funding (CPF) request for the *Technology and Signal Upgrades Project*. Additionally, we provided an update on stabilization and emergency repair efforts along the LOSSAN Rail Corridor.

Office of Congresswoman Young Kim (R-CA) – We met with Congresswoman Kim’s staff to discuss OCTA’s FY26 appropriations requests and followed up on related outreach with the House Appropriations Committee. We also continued discussions on OCTA’s surface transportation reauthorization priorities. In addition, we discussed H.R. 1, the One Big Beautiful Bill, and its implications for infrastructure development and security funding for the Olympics.

Office of Congressman Derek Tran (D-CA) – We followed up with Congressman Tran’s staff on the FY26 Appropriations CPF request for the State Route 57 (SR-57) Improvement Project. We also discussed Olympic-related transportation funding needs for Orange County and continued our dialogue on OCTA’s surface transportation reauthorization priorities, including follow-up on proposed language to restore local suballocation authority for Surface STBG and CMAQ program funds.

Office of Congressman Mike Levin (D-CA) – We met with Congressman Levin’s staff to follow up on emergency repair work along the LOSSAN Rail Corridor and continue providing updates on coordination with the FRA regarding the CRISI grant. We continued discussions on OCTA’s surface transportation reauthorization principles, including the reinstatement of local suballocation authority for STBG and CMAQ funds. Additionally, we discussed FY26 appropriations issues, including OCTA’s Interstate 5 Improvement Project, as well as Olympics-related transportation funding for the region.

Office of Congressman Pete Aguilar (D-CA) – We met with Congressman Aguilar’s staff to discuss OCTA’s request for restoring local suballocation authority for the STBG and CMAQ programs in the upcoming surface transportation reauthorization bill. We also followed up on the THUD Appropriations Subcommittee’s July markup and discussed opportunities to address potential Olympic-related transportation funding needs within the bill.

House T&I Subcommittee on Railroads, Majority Staff – We met with the new Staff Director for the House Subcommittee on Railroads, Pipelines, and Hazardous Materials to discuss progress on the rail title in the upcoming surface transportation reauthorization. We also briefed the new staff director on ongoing issues affecting the LOSSAN Corridor. The discussion focused on the CRISI program, emphasizing the need for greater flexibility to fund emergency repairs along LOSSAN.

FY26 Appropriations Update

Progress on FY26 appropriations slowed in July following procedural disruptions in the House. Speaker Mike Johnson sent members home for the August recess on July 23rd, following a series of failed procedural votes earlier in the week, which delayed floor action on several appropriations bills and other full committee markups, including the Commerce, Justice, Science (CJS) bill.

Before recess, the House Appropriations Committee did advance the Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies bill, which proposes steep reductions across multiple agencies. The measure would cut the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) budget by 23%, following the EPA's announcement of reductions in force (RIFs) affecting the Office of Research and Development. The House Appropriations Committee also advanced the Financial Services and National Security-State bills, but still lacks topline allocations for eight of the twelve appropriations measures.

Regarding transportation funding, key progress was made on the THUD bill. On July 17th, the Committee approved the FY26 THUD Appropriations Act by a 35–28 vote. Subcommittee Chairman Steve Womack (R-AR) highlighted that the bill “right-sizes funding levels,” adds \$2 billion for the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) to hire 2,500 new air traffic controllers, modernizes air traffic control infrastructure, addresses the national truck parking shortage, and cuts overall discretionary spending by 5%. Committee Chairman Tom Cole (R-OK) emphasized that the measure “builds America’s future” by funding highways, rail, airports, and maritime infrastructure while prioritizing fiscal discipline and eliminating “wasteful and duplicative initiatives.” The bill provides \$89.910 billion in total discretionary funding, \$4.458 billion (4.7%) below FY25 levels, with \$3.8 billion more than FY25 for highways, rail, airports, and maritime infrastructure, offset by \$9.4 billion in program eliminations, rescissions, and repurposing.

Key amendments adopted during the markup include:

- A prohibition on implementing congestion pricing in New York City (Rep. LaLota).
- Support for the Regional Infrastructure Accelerator program to fast-track major projects (Rep. Torres).
- A new UAS exclusion zone along the U.S.-Mexico border to counter cartel threats (Rep. Cuellar).

On the Senate side, appropriators are pursuing a minibus strategy combining the Agriculture-FDA, CJS, and Military Construction-VA bills into a roughly \$260 billion package. Senate Appropriations Chair Susan Collins (R-ME) reported “good progress” in resolving objections, though Senators Rand Paul (R-KY) and Josh Hawley (R-MO) at the time of this report still have holds, and Democrats remain divided over FBI headquarters funding and other provisions. With recess approaching, passage of the minibus before the break remains uncertain. The Senate Appropriations Committee has also marked up its THUD and Interior-Environment bills, which maintain or modestly increase funding levels relative to FY25.

The Administration's FY26 budget request proposes \$1.45 trillion in discretionary funding, about \$150 billion below FY25, which if adopted would force a 30% reduction across the remaining bills. Within THUD, the Department of Transportation (USDOT) fares relatively well with a gross request of \$27.1 billion, though this includes \$1.6 billion in rescissions targeting the Charging and Refueling Corridor and National Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (NEVI) programs. In contrast, HUD funding drops sharply from \$68.7 billion in FY25 to \$41.7 billion in FY26.

Office of Management Budget (OMB) Director Russ Vought continues to push for "pocket rescissions," which would allow rescission requests to take effect if Congress fails to act within 45 days, raising concerns for discretionary grant programs with unobligated balances, including CRISI and Low-No Emission Bus programs if future rescission packages are proposed.

Given the delays, it remains highly unlikely all 12 bills will be enacted by September 30th. A Continuing Resolution (CR), likely excluding Community Project Funding, appears inevitable. Passage of the Senate's three-bill minibuss would give negotiators a head start on bicameral talks, though objections in the Senate must be resolved. We are also closely monitoring for future rescissions, which may target unspent balances in transportation and environmental infrastructure accounts. In summary, we will continue tracking appropriations progress, rescissions, and CR planning, as well as implications for OCTA priorities, including our CPF requests, as negotiations advance.

Surface Transportation Reauthorization Update

More progress was made in Congress on the next surface transportation reauthorization, with the current Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) set to expire on September 30, 2026. On July 17th, USDOT Secretary Sean Duffy addressed an infrastructure stakeholders' conference, formally launching the Administration's reauthorization push. In his remarks, Secretary Duffy underscored the Administration's priorities, emphasizing the need to accelerate environmental reviews and permitting, including reforms to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), advance congestion relief, update regulations for autonomous vehicles, and increase investment in bridges and highways.

In the House, the T&I Committee, led by Chairman Sam Graves (R-MO) and Ranking Member Rick Larsen (D-WA), has been conducting staff-level briefings and informal stakeholder meetings in preparation for drafting the next reauthorization bill. Committee leadership has stressed the importance of passing a bipartisan bill well ahead of the 2026 deadline to provide states, metropolitan planning organizations, and local agencies with long-term funding certainty and planning stability. Discussions centered around strengthening the Highway Trust Fund, rebalancing core formula programs such as STBG and CMAQ programs to emphasize highway and bridge investment, and pursuing project delivery reforms to reduce permitting timelines and federal administrative burdens. Chairman Graves has also outlined a "back to basics" framework for reauthorization,

focusing on returning funding to core transportation assets and supplementing the gas tax with new user fees for electric and hybrid vehicles to help stabilize the Highway Trust Fund.

In the Senate, the Environment and Public Works (EPW) Committee has begun conducting listening sessions with stakeholders and Senators to identify bipartisan priorities for the next authorization. Themes emerging from these discussions include improving resilience, advancing rural connectivity, addressing aging infrastructure, and preserving existing assets. EPW leaders have indicated that they intend to begin formal hearings later this summer or early fall, with the goal of developing legislative text in 2026.

On July 16th, USDOT published a Request for Information (RFI) in the Federal Register seeking public comment on the upcoming reauthorization. Comments are due by August 20, 2025. Through this RFI, USDOT is asking states, local governments, transportation agencies, and other stakeholders to provide input on ways to improve safety, accelerate project delivery, promote economic growth, and strengthen federal partnerships. This request signals USDOT's intent to incorporate broad public feedback into its legislative priorities and offers a key opportunity for stakeholders to influence the development of the next surface transportation reauthorization bill.

Taken together, these developments mark a clear ramp-up toward a comprehensive reauthorization process that will shape federal transportation investment for the next five years. During the August recess, we will continue to engage with both the Administration and congressional committees as discussions continue, ensuring that priorities such as restoring local suballocation authority for STBG and CMAQ programs, advancing project delivery reforms, and maintaining flexible formula funding remain central to the debate.

House T&I and Senate EPW Committee Hearings

On July 16th, two major hearings underscored the central role of the upcoming surface transportation reauthorization in shaping federal transportation policy and investment.

The Senate EPW Committee held its second hearing in the “Constructing the Surface Transportation Reauthorization Bill” series, titled “*Stakeholders’ Perspectives*.” Witnesses included North Dakota Governor Kelly Armstrong, Husco International CEO Austin Ramirez, and Phoenix Mayor Kate Gallego, who offered a broad view of reauthorization priorities from state, industry, and municipal perspectives.

The hearing highlighted the need for long-term funding stability, enhanced state and local flexibility, and streamlined project delivery. Governor Armstrong strongly advocated for expanding states’ authority to transfer federal formula funds across programs, endorsing a bipartisan proposal from Senators Cramer (R-ND) and Alsobrooks (D-MD) to increase the current 50% transfer cap to 75%. Mayor Gallego emphasized the importance of discretionary grant programs, such as Safe Streets for All and the Reconnecting Communities Program, as essential tools for cities seeking innovative transportation solutions, while Ramirez focused on technology investments to maintain U.S. competitiveness, urging continued support for EV infrastructure, clean transit, and AI-driven

traffic management. Senators raised issues ranging from Alaska's inadequate roadway network for resource development to the need for updated formula distribution criteria to reflect modern transportation demands.

Project delivery was a central theme, with witnesses calling for enforceable permitting deadlines, expedited judicial review, and expanded categorical exclusions under NEPA to accelerate infrastructure deployment. However, Democrats on the committee, led by Ranking Member Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI), voiced concerns about ensuring fair implementation of any new law, warning that bipartisan cooperation hinges on the Administration's adherence to statutory intent. This tension between speeding project delivery and safeguarding regulatory oversight emerged as a core fault line likely to shape negotiations going forward.

On the House side, the T&I Committee held an oversight hearing on USDOT's policies and FY26 budget request, featuring testimony from Secretary Sean Duffy. Duffy defended the Administration's priorities amid criticism over workforce reductions, delays in grant delivery, and the withdrawal or "rescoping" of previously awarded funds. Members on both sides pressed the

Secretary on a range of topics:

- Aviation safety and air traffic control modernization, considering recent high-profile incidents, with Duffy calling for an additional \$19 billion in air traffic control (ATC) upgrades beyond the \$12.5 billion already appropriated.
- Surface transportation project delivery, with lawmakers urging faster permitting and expanded support for truck parking, rural connectivity, and rail safety.
- Grant distribution and rescissions, as Ranking Member Rick Larsen (D-WA) criticized DOT for withholding 1,300 previously approved grants and proposed cuts to EV charging infrastructure funding.
- Policy priorities, with contentious exchanges over equity considerations in grants, "Buy America" enforcement, and discretionary funding criteria.

Secretary Duffy defended the Administration's deregulatory approach, promising greater flexibility for states and local agencies, while maintaining that safety remains the USDOT's top priority. He pledged to clear the remaining backlog of Biden-era grant applications by early fall and to prioritize projects delivering "real, measurable benefits."

The two hearings collectively underscored the bipartisan urgency to modernize infrastructure, improve project delivery, and provide states and localities with greater funding flexibility, while exposing deep divisions over regulatory reform, equity considerations, and the Administration's handling of previously appropriated funds. The proceedings also reinforced the central role the reauthorization bill will play in reshaping federal transportation policy, with both chambers signaling that negotiations will balance speed, safety, and oversight as they craft legislation to succeed IIJA.

USDOT Announces Nationwide Roadway Safety Initiative

On July 1st, in a letter to every governor, Secretary Duffy asked that their states participate in the FHWA Safe Arterials for Everyone through Reliable Operations and Distraction-Reducing Strategies (SAFE ROADS) initiative. The program targets non-freeway arterial roads where more than half of U.S. roadway deaths occur. The full letter is available [here](#). More information is available [here](#).

USDOT Aims to Remove Financing Policy Roadblock

On July 7th, USDOT announced a policy update that aims to allow all types of transportation infrastructure projects to finance up to 49 percent of eligible costs as authorized by the Transportation Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (TIFIA) program. Due to a long-standing DOT policy, only limited kinds of projects could finance up to 49 percent, while most were capped at up to 33 percent, presenting a roadblock for many project sponsors seeking to build critical infrastructure. More information is available [here](#).

Secretary Duffy Announces First Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) Grants of Trump's Second Term

On July 15th, U.S. Transportation Secretary Sean Duffy announced the selection of 30 projects to receive \$488 million under the BUILD program (formerly RAISE/TIGER). Duffy emphasized the Administration's goal to "move quickly to get money out the door" and focus on infrastructure that boosts safety, economic growth, and competitiveness. A comprehensive link to the spreadsheet featuring all awarded projects from 2009 to the present is available [here](#). More information is available [here](#).

Compared to the Biden Administration's January 2025 awards, which spread \$1.32 billion across 109 projects, the Trump's DOT awarded fewer, larger grants, with an average size of \$16.3 million and a median of \$21.2 million. Five projects received the program's maximum \$25 million award.

The project mix reflects a sharp policy shift: 77% of funds went to roads and bridges, compared to 51% in the previous round, while bike/pedestrian projects received no funding (down from 20% under Biden). Transit and rail also saw reduced allocations, with increased emphasis on ports and airport access projects.



Monthly Legislative Report – August 2025

Advocacy Meetings

Transportation and Infrastructure (T&I) Subcommittee on Highways and Transit Chair David Rouzer (R-NC) – We helped facilitate a County-wide tour and briefing for Chairman Rouzer and his Chief of Staff during his August visit to Orange County. As part of the visit, we reviewed Orange County Transportation Authority's (OCTA) reauthorization priorities and discussed both the timeline and process for the upcoming surface transportation reauthorization. Chairman Rouzer shared his perspective on incorporating more formula funding versus discretionary funding for both highways and transit. We also discussed federal support for the Los Angeles–San Diego–San Luis Obispo (LOSSAN) Rail Corridor, underscoring its importance to the region and the need for continued investment.

House T&I Subcommittee on Highways and Transit, Majority Staff – In August, we followed up with House Transportation and Infrastructure (T&I) Committee staff to discuss reauthorization timing and the potential schedule for a committee markup. We reiterated OCTA's request to restore local suballocation authority for the Surface Transportation Block Grant (STBG) and Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement (CMAQ) programs. In addition, we discussed key project delivery streamlining proposals, including efforts to improve and simplify the Transportation Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (TIFIA) program.

Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Office of Policy and Government Affairs – We met with FHWA staff to review OCTA's reauthorization request submitted to the US Department of Transportation (USDOT)'s stakeholder portal. In these discussions, we flagged OCTA's request for suballocation authority under both the STBG and CMAQ programs and underscored the importance of formally recognizing self-help counties in future formula funding frameworks. We also coordinated with staff to forward OCTA's invitation for the nominated FHWA Administrator (currently serving as Senior Advisor pending Senate confirmation) to attend the upcoming Mobility 21 event.

Office of Senator Padilla (D-CA) – We followed up in August with Senator Padilla's transportation legislative assistant regarding the reinstatement of local suballocation authority for the STBG and CMAQ programs. We also provided additional information to support the office as they prepared their requests in conjunction with Senator Schiff's (D-CA) office to the Senate Environment and Public Works and Senate Commerce Committees.

Office of Congressman Lou Correa (D-CA) – In August, we followed up with Congressman Correa's staff on previously enacted Congressionally Directed Spending for the Santa Ana–Garden Grove Rails to Trails project. OCTA staff confirmed that the environmental phase was completed and that design work is expected to begin soon, keeping the project on track with the timeline previously shared with the Congressman's office. Additionally, we also reviewed OCTA's broader federal priorities, including surface

transportation reauthorization principles and upcoming funding needs related to the FY26 Appropriations bill, particularly opportunities for Olympics-related transportation investments.

Office of Congresswoman Young Kim (R-CA) – We met with Congresswoman Kim’s staff to review OCTA’s fiscal year 2026 (FY26) appropriations priorities and continue discussions on surface transportation reauthorization. A central focus of the meeting was the potential inclusion of OCTA’s Community Project Funding requests in a Continuing Resolution. Congresswoman Kim’s office confirmed that they are actively communicating their support for these projects with House Appropriations Committee staff. The meeting allowed us to reinforce OCTA’s federal funding priorities while ensuring continued engagement on both the reauthorization process and appropriations negotiations.

Office of Congressman Derek Tran (D-CA) – In August, we engaged Congressman Tran’s office regarding OCTA’s request to be included in the LA28 Mobility Committee. During our earlier meeting in Washington, the Congressman expressed his willingness to support OCTA’s inclusion. We have since reiterated this request in a follow-up letter to LA28 and provided his office with a draft template letter formally requesting OCTA’s inclusion on the Committee. We offered to provide any additional background or materials needed, and his office is currently working to finalize the letter.

Office of Congressman Mike Levin (D-CA) – We followed up with Congressman Levin’s staff on OCTA’s FY26 appropriations requests, including the I-5 Improvement Project and potential Olympics-related transportation funding. We also provided a brief update on coordination with FRA regarding the CRISI grant. In addition, we continued discussions on OCTA’s surface transportation reauthorization principles, emphasizing the reinstatement of local suballocation authority for STBG and CMAQ funds.

FY26 Appropriations Update

When Congress returns in September, it faces the challenge of advancing all 12 appropriations bills before the September 30 fiscal year-end deadline. Progress stalled in July after procedural disputes in the House forced an early recess, leaving topline allocations unfinished for eight bills. The House has pursued a funding package more closely aligned with the President’s budget request, while the Senate has opted for a bipartisan, moderate approach. Given the delays, at least a short-term Continuing Resolution (CR) is expected to keep the federal government funded. It is worth noting that there seems to be growing momentum from House Republicans to include Congressionally Directed Spending, which is an unusual development, as earmarks have typically been excluded from CRs.

Surface Transportation Reauthorization Update

More progress was made in August on the next surface transportation reauthorization, with staff-level discussions between House T&I majority staff and USDOT staff focused on funding levels, program priorities, and stakeholder input. USDOT also convened meetings

with transportation stakeholders, such as the National Association of Counties (NACo), to discuss specific issues including project delivery streamlining.

In the Senate, offices have been preparing submissions for reauthorization policy and programmatic funding requests to both the EPW and Commerce Committees, which will be responsible for drafting their respective bill titles.

Looking ahead, both Congress and USDOT are expected to enter a more substantive phase of the reauthorization process in September, with potential draft language beginning to emerge. Throughout the August recess, we continued engaging with the relevant committees and the Administration to ensure OCTA's priorities such as restoring local suballocation authority for STBG and CMAQ, advancing project delivery reforms, and protecting flexible formula funding are included. We also emphasized these priorities with Chairman Rouzer (R-NC) who will have a significant role in the legislation's development during the Chairman's visit to Orange County.

Second Budget Reconciliation Package Under Discussion

Plans for a second budget reconciliation package in 2025 are beginning to be discussed in Congress. The first reconciliation bill, signed into law on July 4, 2025, addressed health care, immigration, and education. Republican leadership is now considering a narrower, tax-focused package later this year.

House Ways and Means majority staff suggest the new package will likely be smaller in scope, aimed at provisions cut for procedural reasons or deprioritized in the earlier bill. Importantly, any second reconciliation measure would need to be "net deficit reducing" to improve its chances of passage, though debate continues over whether a "current policy" baseline should be used in calculating its fiscal impact.

Potential areas of focus include additional tax relief for corporations and individuals, as well as possible health care reforms or pension-related items. For OCTA, the reconciliation process bears close monitoring. While the primary focus is expected to remain on tax policy, reconciliation bills can carry offsets or spending reductions that impact federal discretionary programs. As negotiations advance, we will continue to assess potential risks to infrastructure funding streams and work to ensure OCTA's priorities such as protecting formula programs and preserving funding for major projects are safeguarded.

Standardizing Permitting and Expediting Economic Development Act Introduced in the House

Before the August recess, House Natural Resources Committee Chairman Bruce Westerman (R-AR) and Rep. Jared Golden (D-ME) introduced the bipartisan *Standardizing Permitting and Expediting Economic Development* (SPEED) Act. The legislation would streamline the federal permitting process by amending the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

The bill clarifies that NEPA is a procedural statute, limits reviews to impacts directly tied to a project, and allows agencies to rely on existing environmental reviews to avoid duplication. It also establishes firm deadlines for completing reviews, expands categorical exclusions, narrows judicial review, and codifies recent case law affirming agency discretion over the scope of environmental impacts considered. Importantly, it would also give project applicants more flexibility in managing review timelines.

The SPEED Act reflects growing bipartisan momentum for project delivery reforms in Congress, aligning with OCTA's priorities to reduce delays and streamline federal processes while safeguarding environmental standards. We are closely monitoring the bill's progress as well as its potential inclusion in the upcoming surface transportation reauthorization package, as House T&I staff have indicated they are developing similar provisions.

Marc Molinaro Sworn In as Federal Transit Administrator

In August, Marc Molinaro was sworn in as the 16th Administrator of the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) following his Senate confirmation on August 2, 2025. His appointment provides stability and leadership at a pivotal time for transit agencies navigating IIJA implementation, FY26 appropriations funding negotiations for transit, and broader federal transit funding debates.

Secretary of Transportation Sean Duffy praised Molinaro's confirmation, citing his leadership, experience, and commitment to restoring safety and reliability in public transit. The American Public Transportation Association (APTA) also welcomed Molinaro's confirmation, highlighting his legislative and executive experience. Molinaro brings decades of public service to the role, from his early years as America's youngest mayor in Tivoli, N.Y., to his leadership as Dutchess County executive and later as a member of Congress.

Specifically, his background on the House T&I Committee will be integral as Congress prepares for the next surface transportation reauthorization. Along with his executive experience at the local and state levels, he is well-acquainted with transit agencies' challenges related workforce, funding, and modernization. Tariq Bokhari who had been serving as acting administrator is now serving as the deputy administrator.

USDOT Cancels Additional California High-Speed Rail-Related Project Funding

On August 26, Transportation Secretary Sean P. Duffy announced that the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) is withdrawing \$175 million in funding for four California High-Speed Rail-related projects. The cancellations include the Le Grand Overcrossing (\$89.6 million), Southern San Jose Grade Separations (\$7.5 million), the Downtown Extension (DTX) Final Design (\$24.6 million), and the Madera Station Project (\$54.5 million).

This action follows FRA's July decision to terminate \$4 billion in grants to the California High-Speed Rail Authority after a critical report concluded the Authority was unlikely to complete the Merced–Bakersfield segment by 2033. Secretary Duffy emphasized that FRA would continue reviewing all obligated grants connected to the project and reiterated the

Administration's intent to redirect federal resources toward transportation initiatives that are "well-managed" and more likely to deliver results.

USDOT Enforcement of English Language Requirements for Commercial Drivers

Also on August 26, Transportation Secretary Sean P. Duffy announced that California, Washington, and New Mexico could lose federal Motor Carrier Safety Assistance Program (MCSAP) funds unless they enforce English Language Proficiency (ELP) standards for commercial drivers. The three states have 30 days to demonstrate compliance or risk losing up to 100 percent of their federal safety funding.

The announcement followed a Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) investigation that found these states routinely failed to prohibit drivers with ELP violations. Secretary Duffy tied the enforcement action to broader road safety concerns, citing a recent fatal crash in Florida, and emphasized that states cannot selectively ignore federal safety requirements.



**MATERIALS WILL BE PROVIDED UNDER
SEPARATE COVER PRIOR TO THE
September 18, 2025
LEGISLATIVE AND COMMUNICATIONS
COMMITTEE**