



Monthly Legislative Report – March 2025

Advocacy Meetings

House Transportation and Infrastructure (T&I), Majority Staff Director – We met with the Committee Staff Director to discuss OCTA Board adopted surface transportation reauthorization principles and possible permit streamlining for rail projects in California. We also discussed capital and operational funding needs to support the 2028 Olympics and ways to make strategic investments in regional transportation infrastructure. The Committee Staff Director shared with us the potential timeline for Surface Transportation Reauthorization in the House and information on how to submit stakeholder input. In the meeting, OCTA also highlighted several board-adopted Reauthorization principles, including the prioritization of formula funding with the flexibility to respect the unique nature of regional transportation agencies in the Southern California Association of Governments region. We will continue to follow up with the committee staff in April on specific language requests for the bill.

Office of Congressman Mike Levin (D-CA) – We facilitated a meeting with Rep. Levin and his staff to discuss updates on the Los Angeles – San Diego – San Luis Obispo (LOSSAN) Rail Corridor and possible emergency permitting that could help expedite work and the Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements (CRISI) Program funding that is currently pending. We also discussed board adopted principles for the surface transportation reauthorization.

Senate Banking Committee, Majority Staff – We facilitated a meeting with Majority staff to discuss OCTA's Reauthorization principles. We discussed support for dedicated federal transit funding including the historic 80-20 highway-transit funding split. OCTA CEO also provided an update on the OC Streetcar and target dates for revenue service. Finally, we discussed ways to streamline the discretionary grant process at the Federal Transit Administration and potential impacts we anticipate due to staffing reductions at the regional level.

Senate Commerce Committee, Surface Transportation Subcommittee, Majority Staff – We facilitated a meeting with Majority staff to discuss OCTA's Reauthorization principles. We discussed LOSSAN Corridor as well as the funding challenges for regional rail. We specifically discussed the Surface Transportation Reauthorization timing in the Senate and other upcoming hearings for the Committee.

Office of Congresswoman Young Kim (R-CA) – We facilitated a meeting with Congresswoman Kim to discuss the Surface Transportation Reauthorization, to include board adopted principles as well as the need for emergency permitting for the LOSSAN corridor to help facilitate the timely obligation of state and pending federal funding. We also met several times this month with staff to discuss the Interstate 5 Improvement Project timeline and budget.

Congressman Derek Tran (D-CA) – We met with the Congressman and his staff to discuss OCTA board adopted Surface Transportation Reauthorization principles. We also discussed Community Project Funding (CPF) requests for Fiscal Year 2026 (FY26) as well as strategic investment in transportation infrastructure for the 2028 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

Congressman David Min (D-CA) – We facilitated a meeting with Congressman Min and his staff to discuss the Surface Transportation Reauthorization, to include board adopted principles as well as the need for emergency permitting for the LOSSAN corridor.

Congressman Lou Correa (D-CA) – We facilitated a meeting with Congressman Correa and his legislative director to discuss the Surface Transportation Reauthorization to include board-adopted principles as well as the update that OCTA has officially submitted an Emergency Coastal Development Permit (ECDP) application to the California Coastal Commission to expedite critical rail stabilization work in San Clemente. OCTA CEO also provided an update on the OC Streetcar. In a separate meeting, we also followed up on the FY26 CPF request for OCTA.

Office of Senator Adam Schiff (D-CA) – We met with the Senator’s transportation staffer to discuss the next Surface Transportation Reauthorization as well OCTA board adopted principles. OCTA CEO provided an overview of the work along the LOSSAN corridor as well as other ongoing projects in the County.

Office of Senator Alex Padilla (D-CA) – We met with the Senator’s transportation staffer to discuss the next Surface Transportation Reauthorization as well as OCTA board-adopted principles. OCTA CEO provided an overview of the work along the LOSSAN corridor as well as an update that OCTA has officially submitted an ECDP application to the California Coastal Commission to expedite critical rail stabilization work in San Clemente for the four reinforcement areas as part of the CRSP. The Senator’s staff shared in the meeting that US Department of Transportation (USDOT) Secretary Duffy may be visiting Southern California in the coming weeks, and the Senator’s staff have suggested to USDOT staff that the Secretary tour the LOSSAN corridor. In a separate meeting earlier this month, we met with the staff to discuss FY 26 Congressional Directed Spending Requests (CDS) for FY 26, which we submitted for OCTA.

House Transportation and Infrastructure (T&I), Rail Subcommittee Majority Staff – We met with the House Committee staff and provided an overview of the LOSSAN corridor and ongoing repair work. We also discussed possible timeline for developing the Rail title for the Surface Transportation Reauthorization to include potential federal funding to support passenger rail in key rail corridors.

FY26 Appropriations Update

At the end of the month Chairman Tom Cole (R-OK) of the House Appropriations Committee told members that the House will officially begin the FY26 appropriations process. He also told his committee members that on Monday, April 14, Members may begin submitting

programmatic and language requests and Community Project Funding requests for the upcoming year. Starting next week, the Chairman of each subcommittee will begin releasing guidance for each bill. As a result of the short timeline to draft bills in time for floor consideration, the Committee is maintaining similar eligible program accounts for FY26 Community Project Funding. Additionally, due to the high demand and limited ability to fund all eligible requests, the limit of 15 projects per Member will be continued.

- Chairman Cole's dear colleague is available [here](#).
- Programmatic and language request guidance is available [here](#).
- Community Project Funding request guidance is available [here](#).

Members may submit a request to fund a specific program or activity in the bill at a specified level. Members may also submit a request to include specific bill or report language that does not direct funding to a particular entity but encourages, urges, or directs some type of action. Finally, Members may submit a request to fund specific projects in their communities, so long as the projects have a federal nexus and meet other requirements established by federal law, House Rules, and the Committee to ensure only high-quality projects are requested and funded. We are currently meeting with all the Orange County delegation and submitting project requests for each office. All CPF projects that were included in House Reports for Fiscal Year 2025 (FY25) are eligible in FY26 but must be resubmitted.

DEADLINES FOR MEMBERS OF CONGRESS:

Transportation and Housing and Urban Development

- Programmatic and Language Request Guidance (link forthcoming)
 - Submission Deadline: Friday, May 23, 2025, at 6:00 p.m.
- Community Project Funding Request Guidance (link forthcoming)
 - Submission Deadline: Friday, May 23, 2025, at 6:00 p.m.

(Note: Members must then post CPF requests to their websites by Friday, June 13, 2025, to comply with House rules.)

Budget Reconciliation Update for March

Speaker Mike Johnson (R-LA) and Senate Majority Leader John Thune (R-SD) met several times in March to discuss how to move forward on a budget reconciliation package encompassing the key components of President Trump's border, defense, energy, and tax bill proposals. The two leaders are working to reach a compromise between the respective House and Senate budget resolutions passed earlier this month. Senate Republicans are currently working to get a formal decision from the Senate parliamentarian on whether certain proposals may be prevented from being included as part of the reconciliation approach. The Senate parliamentarian will decide to what extent the Republicans can extend President Trump's 2017 tax cuts, and whether other measures are "in order" and can be incorporated for reconciliation purposes. Upon receiving the Senate parliamentarian's determinations, Majority Leader Thune stated that he would schedule a "vote-a-rama" on a

budget resolution in April, although he acknowledged that timeline could slip by another week.

Following passage by both chambers of a budget resolution, the Committees of jurisdiction would be tasked with drafting the specific legislative language as directed by the resolution. As we have previously reported, whether through a single House reconciliation bill or two separate Senate bills, the overarching goals of the White House and Congressional GOP Leadership are to enact more spending on defense and border security, support additional oil and gas energy development, and extend the 2017 Jobs and Tax Cut Act, along with eliminating tax on overtime and tips, while looking for offsets and “pay-fors,” while also seeking to raise the debt ceiling. Of note, the need for Congress to address the debt ceiling in the coming months (either through reconciliation or as a standalone process) became even more apparent when the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) recently estimated that the U.S. is set to default on its debt in August or September unless Congress passes legislation to increase the debt ceiling.

Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) INDEPENDENCE ACT OF 2025

In March, Congressman Jared Moskowitz (D-FL) (having previously served as the Director of the Florida Division of Emergency Management) and Congressman Byron Donalds (R-FL) introduced H.R. 2308 - *The FEMA Independence Act of 2025*. This bipartisan bill would move FEMA out of the Department of Homeland Security and establish FEMA as an independent Cabinet-level agency that reports directly to the President. The bill would require FEMA to be led by a Senate-confirmed director who must have demonstrated ability and knowledge of emergency management and homeland security, including no less than five years of executive leadership and management in the public and private sectors. Also, as a cabinet-level agency, it would have up to four deputy directors, along with ten regional directors selected by the FEMA Director. Overall, this legislation seeks to reform FEMA, rather than reduce it, by streamlining FEMA's emergency response functions, reducing bureaucratic delays, and refocusing the agency on its core mission of responding before, during, and after disaster events. The legislation comes as President Trump has expressed a desire to reduce FEMA and redirect more of its functions to the responsibilities of the States, and his Administration has launched a FEMA Review Council that will have its first meeting on April 24th. The bill has been referred to both the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure as well as the House Committee on Homeland Security and awaits further consideration.

Amtrak CEO Resigns

On March 16th, Amtrak President and CEO Stephen Gardner resigned his post amid criticism from the White House and calls for the full privatization of Amtrak. Transportation Secretary Sean Duffy had previously said in a statement that Amtrak needs to address safety concerns at Washington's Union Station. "It's time for Amtrak leadership to clean up Union Station," he said. "It's time to rid our nation's treasures of homelessness and crime. Commuters and travelers need to feel safe in our capital." The House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee plans this year to continue the debate and discussion surrounding

the future of Amtrak and incorporate new policy in the Surface Transportation Reauthorization.

President Trump Pulls Rep. Stefanik (R-NY) Nomination to be UN Ambassador

At the end of March, President Donald Trump announced he would withdraw the nomination of New York Rep. Elise Stefanik to be U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, citing a need for Republicans to keep the Congresswoman's seat amid narrow margins in the House. "With a very tight Majority, I don't want to take a chance on anyone else running for Elise's seat," President Trump posted on his Truth Social platform. House Republicans, who hold only a thin majority in the chamber, face increased vulnerability just two months into President Trump's second term as they try to get a budget reconciliation bill through to enact the President's agenda.

USDOT Works to Expediate 2024 Discretionary Grant Agreements

At the end of March, the USDOT began expediting grant agreements that align with President Trump's Executive Orders (EO's). USDOT Secretary Duffy has directed staff to obligate as many new grant agreements as possible and allows changes to grant summaries and/or applications for previously awarded funds to help conform those agreements to the current President Trump EOs. Secretary Duffy reiterated his commitment to expediting transportation funding during a Senate Environmental and Public Works Committee meeting on the upcoming Surface Transportation Reauthorization Act.

Republican Senators Introduce Bills that Would Restrict President Trump's Tariff Authority

Senate Republicans are growing concerned with President Donald Trump's approach to broad-spanning global tariffs. Just one day after President Trump's announcement of sweeping new tariffs, Republican senators released a pair of bills that would restrict President Trump's trade powers. Senators Grassley (R-IA) and Maria Cantwell released draft text that would restrict presidential trade powers, in part by requiring congressional approval of tariffs within 60 days. Similarly Senator Rand Paul (R-KY) introduced a bill to require congressional approval for the implementation of any tariffs. Paul was one of four Republican senators to vote with Democrats on Wednesday to pass a measure (SJ Res 37) that would roll back recent Canadian tariffs.