



## Monthly Legislative Report – March 2026

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### Advocacy Meetings

**Office of Representative Ken Calvert (R-CA)** – In March, we met regularly with Congressman Calvert’s staff to finalize a Southern California delegation letter to the House Transportation and Infrastructure (T&I) Committee Chairman and Ranking Member urging inclusion of language in the upcoming surface transportation reauthorization to restore local suballocation authority for Surface Transportation Block Grant (STBG) and Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) funds. The letter emphasizes that, for more than three decades, this structure enabled local agencies to deliver projects efficiently and with direct accountability, while the 2021 federal corrective action shifting authority to the MPO level has led to longer approval timelines, reduced flexibility, and increased administrative burdens. This effort reflects strong regional alignment and continues to gain traction with Committee leadership as reauthorization advances.

**Office of Representative Linda Sanchez (D-CA)** – We discussed with the Congresswoman’s office a Community Project Funding request for the OC Loop Segment A Project, which will deliver a bikeway in the City of La Habra along the Union Pacific right-of-way. The project is part of OCTA’s broader 66-mile OC Loop network and will provide safe, multimodal connections for residents, including access to schools, parks, and key community destinations.

**Office of Representative Lou Correa (D-CA)** – We worked closely with Congressman Correa’s staff, who served as a co-lead on the delegation letter to the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee Chairman and Ranking Member, urging inclusion of language in the upcoming surface transportation reauthorization to restore local suballocation authority for Surface Transportation Block Grant (STBG) and Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) funds. We also engaged with the Congressman’s staff on a Community Project Funding request to support the Metrolink Rehabilitation Project, which would fund critical improvements at the Orange, Santa Ana, and Anaheim Regional Transportation Intermodal Center (ARTIC) train stations.

**Office of Representative Dave Min (D-CA)** – In March, we met multiple times with Congressman David Min’s staff to discuss a Fiscal Year (FY) 2027 Community Project Funding request for the Irvine Metrolink Rehabilitation Project. The project, led by the Orange County Transportation Authority, seeks to rehabilitate critical rail infrastructure serving Orange County, including upgrades to worn rail, signal components, rail cars, and related systems.

**Office of Representative Mike Levin (D-CA)** – We worked with Congressman Levin’s staff on a Community Project Funding request for the PCH Bridge Replacement Project in Dana Point, California. The project would replace the existing rail bridge spanning Pacific Coast Highway with a new single-track steel through-plate girder bridge. The effort includes

demolition of the aging structure and construction of a modern, resilient bridge designed to improve safety and minimize disruption during construction.

**Office of Representative David Rouzer (R-NC)** – We met several times with Congressman Rouzer’s Chief of Staff to discuss the timing of the surface transportation reauthorization, with the Committee now planning for an April markup of a draft bipartisan bill.

**House Appropriations Majority Staff** – We met several times with Appropriations Committee staff to clarify guidance and key application requirements for FY27 Community Project Funding requests and to discuss several of OCTA’s priority projects submitted to delegation offices.

**Office of Senator Adam Schiff (D-CA)** – We followed up in March with Senator Schiff’s appropriations staff to facilitate the submission of OCTA’s Congressionally Directed Spending (CDS) request for the Orange County Maintenance Facility in Irvine, California.

**Office of Senator Alex Padilla (D-CA)** – We met with Senator Padilla’s staff to discuss a joint Congressionally Directed Spending (CDS) request for the Orange County Maintenance Facility in Irvine, California.

**Office of Representative Young Kim (R-CA)** – We met with Congresswoman Kim’s transportation staff to submit a FY27 Community Project Funding request for the State Route 91 (SR-91) East Corridor Operations Project. The request would support construction of key improvements along SR-91 in Orange and Riverside Counties. In addition, we helped facilitate an on-site tour of major transportation projects in Orange County for the Congresswoman’s legislative staff to provide firsthand insight into regional infrastructure needs and priorities.

**Office of Representative Derek Tran (D-CA)** – We met with Congressman Tran’s office to discuss and facilitate a Community Project Funding request for the State Route 57 (SR-57) Improvement Project.

### **FY26 and FY27 Appropriations Update**

As negotiations continue to resolve the partial government shutdown affecting the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), the path forward appears increasingly tied to passage of a second budget reconciliation package using the same legislative mechanism as H.R. 1, the “One Big Beautiful Bill Act.”

While a reconciliation path is being determined, some senior appropriators are also floating proposals to provide short-term supplemental funding for DHS to ensure federal employees impacted by the shutdown are paid and normal operations at airports in the United States are restored.

Regarding budget reconciliation this path allows certain fiscal measures to pass the Senate with a simple majority (51 votes), bypassing the traditional 60-vote threshold required to

advance most legislation. While designed as an expedited process to address budgetary priorities, reconciliation is limited in scope and cannot include extraneous policy provisions. To initiate reconciliation, both the House and Senate must first adopt identical budget resolutions directing committees to meet specified spending and revenue targets. Committees then draft legislative language consistent with those instructions. Earlier this year, the Republican Study Committee released its “Reconciliation 2.0” framework, titled *Making the American Dream Affordable Again*, which focuses on housing affordability, healthcare, energy policy, federal spending, and codifying key presidential executive actions.

Despite the unresolved FY26 DHS funding and the absence of a formal presidential budget submission, Congress has already begun the FY27 appropriations process. Member portals for FY27 Community Project Funding (CPF) requests have now closed, and submissions are currently under review. Notably, despite the ongoing partial shutdown, House appropriators held a series of hearings on March 25 and 26 to solicit member priorities and input on Fiscal Year 2027 funding bills. In the Senate, offices are similarly working to finalize Congressionally Directed Spending (CDS) requests, though timelines are slightly later than in the House.

At the same time, both chambers are also awaiting the President’s budget request, which will serve as a starting point for negotiations or primarily signal the Administration’s policy priorities. The Office of Management and Budget, led by Director Russ Vought, had previously indicated an April 3 target for release of the President’s partial budget request.

### **House Republicans Discuss 2026 Agenda at Annual Policy Conference**

House Republicans convened in Doral, Florida this month for their annual policy retreat, aiming to align on a legislative agenda for the remainder of the year ahead of the November midterm elections. The retreat comes as leadership navigates a narrow majority alongside broader economic pressures, rising energy costs, and ongoing geopolitical tensions.

Speaker Mike Johnson outlined four key legislative priorities for completion before November: surface transportation reauthorization, Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA) reauthorization, a new Water Resources Development Act (WRDA), and advancing Farm Bill-related legislation. As mentioned earlier, Leadership also reaffirmed its intent to pursue a second budget reconciliation package using the same legislative vehicle as H.R. 1, the “One Big Beautiful Bill Act” (also referred to as the Working Families Tax Cut Act).

President Trump also addressed the conference and continues to play a central role in shaping the House GOP agenda. He has urged Congress to prioritize passage of the SAVE Act, a proof-of-citizenship voting requirement, and has signaled a willingness to withhold support for other legislative efforts until it is enacted.

More broadly, discussions at the retreat focused on leveraging reconciliation to advance elements of the Administration’s economic agenda, including tax policy, cost-of-living

measures, and energy policy. At the same time, internal conversations highlighted the ongoing challenge for leadership in maintaining caucus unity while advancing an ambitious legislative agenda under tight political constraints.

House Republican leadership remains optimistic that they can advance a combination of a broader reconciliation package, targeted legislative items such as the Surface Transportation Reauthorization to support vulnerable incumbents, and elements of housing policy currently moving through the Senate. However, debate over specific policy provisions remains ongoing, and significant legislative action may ultimately be shaped by political dynamics heading into the midterm elections.

### **House T&I Chairman Sam Graves Announces Retirement**

House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee Chairman Sam Graves (R-MO) announced he will not seek reelection, concluding a 25-year career in Congress and triggering a high-stakes leadership transition on one of Capitol Hill's most influential and bipartisan committees.

In a statement, Ranking Member Rick Larsen (D-WA) praised Graves as a "fierce advocate for infrastructure investment and transportation safety," highlighting their longstanding bipartisan partnership. Larsen pointed to a series of major legislative accomplishments under Graves' leadership, including the 2024 FAA Reauthorization, the Thomas R. Carper Water Resources Development Act of 2024, the Coast Guard Authorization Act of 2025, and the recently advanced ALERT Act, all of which demonstrated Graves' ability to deliver results in an often-polarized Congress.

Graves' departure comes at a pivotal moment, as the committee works toward surface transportation reauthorization ahead of a September 30 deadline. While members have expressed confidence that work will continue uninterrupted, this announcement adds a renewed sense of urgency for House Majority members and for Chairman Graves to complete the work currently underway.

Looking ahead to the next Congress, much will depend on the outcome of the November midterm elections, though early positioning is already underway. Congressman David Rouzer (R-NC), who chairs the Highways and Transit Subcommittee, has publicly declared his intention to seek the gavel if Republicans retain the majority and has been actively building support within the conference. If Democrats take control of the House, Rick Larsen is expected to pursue the chairmanship, having served as ranking member since 2023.

Graves' retirement was not entirely unexpected. In 2024, he received a waiver from the Republican Steering Committee to extend his tenure as chair beyond standard term limits, signaling that this term could be his last. Colleagues on both sides of the aisle have emphasized his pragmatic leadership style and ability to advance bipartisan legislation, qualities that may be tested as the committee transitions to new leadership.

Despite the leadership transition, committee members including Representatives David Rouzer (R-NC) and Daniel Webster (R-FL) have indicated that work on surface transportation reauthorization will continue. However, with a compressed legislative calendar and election-year dynamics, the path forward remains uncertain. Graves in recent conversations has stated he intends to remain fully engaged through the end of his term, signaling continuity in the near term even as the longer-term direction of the committee begins to take shape.

### **Trump Administration Challenges California Electric Vehicle (EV) Mandate in Federal Court**

The U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) and U.S. Department of Justice have filed a lawsuit seeking to block California's electric vehicle (EV) mandate, arguing that the state's regulations unlawfully impose fuel economy standards that are preempted by federal law. The lawsuit, filed on behalf of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), asserts that California's policies effectively create state-specific fuel economy requirements, which are governed exclusively at the federal level under the Energy Policy and Conservation Act (EPCA). Federal officials argue that allowing individual states to set such standards would create a fragmented regulatory environment for automakers and increase vehicle costs nationwide.

Secretary Sean P. Duffy and Attorney General Pamela Bondi emphasized that the Administration's position is focused on maintaining a single national standard for fuel economy and protecting consumer affordability and manufacturing stability. The Administration also pointed to its broader "Freedom Means Affordable Cars" initiative, which aims to reduce vehicle costs and adjust federal Corporate Average Fuel Economy (CAFE) standards. The case specifically targets regulations adopted by the California Air Resources Board (CARB), arguing that these policies exceed state authority and interfere with interstate commerce. The litigation has been filed in the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of California. This legal challenge marks a significant escalation in the ongoing federal-state dispute over vehicle emissions standards and EV policy, with potential implications for automakers, consumers, and the future structure of national transportation and environmental regulation.

### **USDOT Announces Nearly \$1 Billion in Safe Streets & Roads for All Grants**

Secretary Sean P. Duffy announced that the U.S. Department of Transportation will make approximately \$999.5 million available through the Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A) grant program to support roadway safety improvements nationwide.

The funding is intended to help state and local governments enhance critical safety infrastructure, including improving emergency response times, expanding truck parking capacity, modernizing rail crossings, and investing in safer streets for pedestrians and families.

The program is designed to reduce roadway fatalities and serious injuries by supporting comprehensive, data-driven safety strategies. Eligible applicants must submit proposals by May 26, 2026, as outlined in the Notice of Funding Opportunity.

SS4A offers two primary grant categories:

- **Planning and Demonstration Grants**, which support the development or enhancement of Comprehensive Safety Action Plans; and
- **Implementation Grants**, which fund projects and strategies aligned with existing safety plans to address identified roadway risks.

Grant awards will be determined through a collaborative review process led by the Department, with input from the Federal Highway Administration, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, and Federal Transit Administration.

### **House T&I Advance Commercial Drivers' License Legislation**

On March 18, 2026, the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee advanced H.R. 5688 ("Dalilah's Law"), a trucking safety bill focused on tightening commercial driver's license (CDL) requirements, including English proficiency standards, immigration status verification, and increased penalties for noncompliance. The markup was unusually partisan for the committee, with the bill developed and advanced largely along party lines and without bipartisan consensus.

While the bill moved forward as a stand-alone measure, leadership has agreed to keep these provisions separate from the broader Surface Transportation Reauthorization. This preserves momentum toward a bipartisan reauthorization package expected to move in April. This is a positive development, as it reduces the risk that divisive policy provisions could delay or complicate passage of the core surface transportation bill in the House.