



Monthly Legislative Report – May 2023

May Advocacy Meetings

Congresswoman Young Kim (R-CA) – We met with Congresswoman Kim and staff to discuss support for the two “Community Project Funding” requests to be included in the Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies bill.

Congressman Mike Levin (D-CA) – We met with Congressman Levin’s staff to discuss support for the Community Project Funding request to be included in the Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies bill. We also discussed the debt ceiling negotiations as well as the transportation rescissions that were part of the final deal and the impact it could have for Orange County Transportation Authority (OCTA). Finally, we facilitated a meeting with the Congressman’s staff to discuss the Los Angeles – San Diego – San Luis Obispo Rail Corridor (**LOSSAN** Corridor).

Congresswoman Katie Porter (D-CA) – We met with Congresswoman Porter’s staff to provide an update on OCTA projects and grant requests.

Congressman Troy Nehls (R-TX) – We met with Congressman Nehls’ staff to discuss rail safety legislation and other issues to include the House Transportation and Infrastructure’s Rail Subcommittee letter to the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) Administrator. The Committee’s letter can be found [HERE](#).

Congressman Sam Graves (R-MO) – We met with the Chairman’s staff to discuss transportation projects in the region and updated his staff on the LOSSAN service. We also discussed potential rail safety legislation and funding for commuter rail.

Senator Dianne Feinstein (D-CA) – We met with Senator Feinstein’s appropriations and transportation staff to discuss support for our Congressionally Directed Spending request to be included in the Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies bill. We also discussed the impact of transportation rescissions on transportation entities.

Senator Alex Padilla (D-CA) – We met with Senator Padilla’s staff to discuss support for our Congressionally Directed Spending request to be included in the Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies bill and provided additional project details. We also provided the staff with updates on the LOSSAN rail service. We discussed with staff the debt limit and how rescissions have the potential to impact transportation programs in California.

Debt Ceiling Negotiations

On May 31st, the House passed a bill to raise the debt limit, rescind certain COVID-19 emergency funding, and impose new budget requirements. The bill, [H.R. 3746](#) - *Fiscal Responsibility Act of 2023*, was passed by a vote of 314-117 (2-R & 2-D not voting). On June 1st the Senate passed the debt limit bill on a 63-to-36 vote clearing the 60-vote threshold. The bill will now head to the President's desk for signing.

Rep. Porter (D-CA) voted against the bill. All votes are available at the following link [here](#).

Bill Summary:

- Rescinds certain unobligated funds that were provided to address COVID-19 and to the Internal Revenue Service (*see the attached summary*).
- Reinstates pay-as-you-go rules (Administrative actions that cost money must be offset).
- Terminates the suspension of federal student loan payments.
- Expands work requirements for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program.
- Expedites the permitting process for certain energy projects.
- If Congress does not pass the appropriations bills on time, there will be an automatic cut of 1% to all discretionary accounts in the Continuing Resolution.
- Provides funding for the Department of Veterans Affairs Cost of War Toxic Exposure Fund.
- Provides funding for the Department of Commerce Nonrecurring Expenses Fund.

A Republican House Budget Committee summary is available at the following link [here](#).

The House Rules Committee Hearing, where Members from both parties discussed the bill, is available at the following link [here](#).

The Appropriations process has been halted while Congress focused on the debt limit, but appropriators are expected to resume the process in June.

Federal Transit Administration (FTA) \$220 million for Ferry Service

On May 18th, the U.S. Department of Transportation's (USDOT) FTA announced the availability of \$220 million to support or modernize passenger ferry service in rural and urban communities. This funding will be allocated to two grant programs, the Passenger Ferry Program and the Ferry Service for Rural Communities Program, and will be used to buy, replace, or modernize passenger ferries, terminals, and related equipment, as well as to provide funding to ensure essential ferry service in rural communities. Instructions for applying and eligibility can be found on [FTA's website](#) and at [GRANTS.GOV](#). Proposals must be submitted electronically by July 17, 2023.

LOCAL Infrastructure Act Reintroduced in Senate

Senators Roger Wicker (R-MS) and Debbie Stabenow (D-MI) have reintroduced [S.1453](#) - *LOCAL Infrastructure Act*, which would allow counties to advance refunds of municipal bonds on a tax-exempt basis. The tax-exempt status of advance refunding municipal bonds has been unavailable to counties since 2017 due to a spending offset provision of the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act. Counties have historically relied on tax-exempt advance refunding to lower borrowing costs, freeing up funds to be used for other important capital projects and minimizing costs to taxpayers. The *LOCAL Infrastructure Act* has been sponsored in the U.S. Senate by Sens. Wicker and Stabenow since the 116th Congress. Although a companion bill has not yet been introduced in the U.S. House, House Municipal Finance Caucus co-Chair Rep. Dutch Ruppersberger (D-MD) and Rep. David Kustoff (R-TN) recently reintroduced the "*Investing in Our Communities Act*," which would also restore the tax-exempt status of advance refunding municipal bonds. More information is available [HERE](#).

Charging and Fueling Infrastructure Discretionary Grant Program

On May 15th, the *Charging and Fueling Infrastructure Discretionary Grant Program* details were announced. The program would deploy publicly accessible electric vehicle charging and alternative fueling infrastructure in urban and rural areas. The program provides two funding categories of grants and offers up to \$700 million from Fiscal Years 2022 and 2023. The application submission deadline has been extended to June 13, 2023. Eligible applicants include States or political subdivision of states, metropolitan planning organizations, unit of local governments, special purpose districts or public authorities with a transportation function, including port authorities, Indian tribes, U.S. territories authorities, agencies, or instrumentalities or entities owned by, one or more entities listed above group of, entities listed above, state or local authorities with ownership of publicly accessible, transportation facilities (applies to community program only). More information is available [HERE](#).

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Electrification Programs

The EPA has earmarked \$3 billion for the Clean Ports Program, focusing on electrifying port infrastructure, as part of efforts to reduce carbon emissions and transition to cleaner energy sources. The EPA, in collaboration with the Department of Energy (DOE) and the USDOT, is actively working on a goal for decarbonizing transportation. In early May, the EPA announced a \$4 billion investment from the 2022 legislation, with \$3 billion allocated to technologies targeting harmful air and climate pollutants at US ports, primarily for the development of electrification infrastructure under the Clean Ports Program. The remaining funding will be used for reducing vehicle emissions through the Clean Heavy-Duty Vehicle Program. More information can be found [HERE](#).

Federal Railroad Administration's Interstate Rail Compacts (IRC) Program

On May 8th, the FRA made \$5.8 million in funding available through the Interstate Rail Compacts (IRC) Program. The program aims to support the development of multi-state and regional intercity passenger rail services by providing federal funding and technical assistance to implementing entities. The grants can be used for administering IRCs, systems planning, promoting intercity passenger rail operations, preparing grant applications, and coordinating operations. The funds will help entities prepare for rail capital projects aligned with the USDOT's strategic goals. Applications must be submitted by July 10, 2023. Additional information can be found [HERE](#).

Rail Research and Development Center of Excellence

On May 1st, the FRA announced the availability of \$5 million in funding to establish a rail research and development Center of Excellence. The program aims to enhance the safety, performance, and sustainability of freight, intercity passenger, and commuter rail systems. The three-year initiative will support research, education, workforce development, and training efforts related to various aspects of rail, including safety technologies, energy efficiency, maintenance, and operational reliability. Eligible applicants are encouraged to have a strong track record in rail research and development can apply for grants, with the Center of Excellence funding up to 50 percent of selected proposals. More information can be found at the link [HERE](#).

Rail Vehicle Replacement Program Awards

On May 5th, the FTA announced the selection of six projects across six states to receive funding for the replacement of aging passenger railcars. With approximately \$703 million in funding, these projects aim to improve reliability, safety, and accessibility on rail transit systems. The Rail Vehicle Replacement Program, established to enhance service and the customer experience on subways, commuter rail, and light rail systems, will allocate a total of \$1.5 billion in funding through 2026. By replacing outdated railcars, which contribute to service delays and lack modern amenities and accessibility features, these grants will provide faster, safer, and more reliable service for millions of Americans who rely on rail transit. The selected projects include the purchase of new rail vehicles by transit agencies

in Sacramento, California; South Florida; Chicago; the Missouri-Illinois Metropolitan District; Greater Cleveland; and Utah. For more information click [HERE](#).

Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Blueprint for Air Taxis

The FAA has unveiled an updated blueprint outlining airspace and procedure changes to accommodate future air taxis and other Advanced Air Mobility (AAM) operations. The blueprint shows gradual implementation of AAM operations, starting with air taxis using existing routes and infrastructure like helipads and vertiports. As the number of operations increases, air taxis are expected to fly in designated corridors between major airports and vertiports in city centers. Over time, these corridors may become more complex, accommodating multiple flows of aircraft in both directions. The FAA anticipates that aircraft technology, including automation and real-time data sharing, will play an increasingly significant role in these corridors. Developed in collaboration with NASA and industry stakeholders, the blueprint serves as a common reference for research and decision-making in the field of AAM. More information can be found [HERE](#).

2023 FAA Drone Symposium and Advanced Air Mobility Summit

On May 5th, the FAA and the Association for Uncrewed Vehicle Systems International (AUVSI) announced the co-hosting of two significant events: the 8th Annual FAA Drone Symposium and the inaugural Advanced Air Mobility (AAM) Summit. Taking place from August 1-3 at the Baltimore Convention Center in Maryland, these events will gather representatives from the FAA, government agencies, international aviation experts, industry leaders, and academia. The symposium will focus on accelerating the safe integration of drones, including advanced operations such as beyond visual line of sight and UAS Traffic Management. The AAM Summit will explore the transformative potential of air taxis and electric vertical take-off and landing aircraft, highlighting the FAA's efforts to ensure safe and efficient operations that meet rigorous safety standards. More information can be found [HERE](#).

\$52 Million in grants to Improve Safety and Reduce Travel Times

On May 25th, the USDOT granted \$52 million to eight states for technology-based solutions to improve travel experiences in highways and transit systems. The program is called Advanced Transportation Technology and Innovation and includes funding for projects in rural areas and areas of persistent poverty. To view the grant recipient and more information on the program click [HERE](#).

USDOT Partners with Supply Chain Companies to Launch New Data Exchange to Strengthen Supply Chains

The *Freight Logistics Optimization Works* (FLOW) was launched in March 2022 and is a first-of-its-kind program to develop new shared data infrastructure to give companies information to proactively address supply chain challenges via a forward-looking, integrated view of container volumes and equipment in the US. The initiative aims to improve supply

chain resilience and address structural weaknesses exposed by the COVID-19 pandemic. FLOW currently has 53 member companies. More information about the initiative and private partners is available [HERE](#).

Wildlife Crossings Program from Federal Highway Administration

The Wildlife Crossings Pilot Program (WCPP) is a competitive grant program aimed at reducing Wildlife Vehicle Collisions (WVCs) and improving habitat connectivity for terrestrial and aquatic species. There is an authorized total of \$350 million in federal-aid contract authority funding from 2022 to 2026 for the WCPP. 60% of the funds will be allocated towards rural areas. The USDOT, through the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), is responsible for awarding these funds with applications open until August 1st. Additional information can be found at the link [HERE](#).

DOE funding for Electric Vehicle Infrastructure

On May 22nd, the DOE introduced a funding opportunity of \$99.5 million and have selected 45 projects amounting to \$87 million to propel the development of electric vehicle (EV) technologies, train a skilled workforce for electrified transportation, and ensure fair access to clean mobility options in disadvantaged communities. These projects aim to expedite the adoption of EV transportation. The recently unveiled funding opportunity also aims to assist projects that enhance EV charging infrastructure in underserved communities, create EV batteries utilizing readily available materials, and provide further education to consumers about EVs and charging. More information can be found [HERE](#).

2023 Natural Gas Distribution Infrastructure and Safety Modernization Grant

The Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA) has released the funding opportunity for the Natural Gas Distribution Infrastructure Safety and Modernization (NGDISM) grant program. The funding totals to \$1 billion over the next five years and the grants will be accessible to municipalities or community-owned utilities (excluding for-profit organizations) with the aim of addressing the repair, rehabilitation, or replacement of their natural gas distribution pipeline systems, or specific sections. The funding can be utilized to acquire equipment that serves the purpose of reducing incidents and fatalities and preventing economic losses. More information can be found [HERE](#).

\$1 Billion for Local Communities to Improve Roadway Safety through the “Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A) Grant

On April 17th, the US Department of Transportation announced the availability of \$1.177 billion in grant funding for local projects that improve roadway safety. The funds are from the competitive grant program “*Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A)*.” In February, USDOT announced 473 communities received Action Planning grants, and 37 communities received Implementation grants from the first round of SS4A funding. With similar funding available this year, the Department is encouraging all interested communities to apply.

More Resources:

- [Safe Streets and Roads for All Notice of Funding Opportunity](#)
- [Funding can be targeted toward known high-crash areas, identified here](#)