



Monthly Legislative Report – September

September Advocacy Meetings

Office of Congresswoman Young Kim (R-CA) – We met with Congresswoman Kim’s staff to discuss our appropriations request and next steps for the appropriations process in the House.

Office of Congressman Mike Levin (D-CA) – We met with Congressman Levin’s staff to discuss the Transportation Housing and Urban Development (THUD) appropriations bill process and expectations for transportation programs funding levels. We also followed up on information regarding safety detection devices along the Los Angeles – San Diego – San Luis Obispo Rail Corridor (LOSSAN) rail corridor.

Office of Congressman Lou Correa (D-CA) – We met with Congressman Correa’s staff to discuss safety and security funding opportunities for Orange County Transportation Authority (OCTA) in preparation for the 2028 Olympics.

Office of Congresswoman Grace Napolitano (D-CA) – We met with Congresswoman Napolitano’s staff to follow up on the aviation fuel tax issues and next steps for the FAA Reauthorization legislation.

Office of Congressman Doug LaMalfa (R-CA) – We met with Congressman LaMalfa's staff to discuss [H.R.1435](#) - Preserving Choice in Vehicle Purchases Act, which was passed in the House of Representatives.

Office of Congressman Tom Cole (R-OK) – We met with Chairman Tom Cole to discuss the Transportation Housing and Urban Development (THUD) appropriations bill and the expectation of funding levels.

Office of Senator Alex Padilla (D-CA) – We met with Senator Padilla’s staff to discuss the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Reauthorization bill.

House Transportation and Infrastructure Subcommittee on Aviation Staff – We met with Subcommittee Members to discuss the FAA Reauthorization Extension included in the Continuing Resolution (CR).

Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee Majority Staff – We met with Senate Commerce staff to discuss details about the FAA Extension from the CR.

Continuing Resolution (CR) Update

On the last day of Fiscal Year 2023 (FY23), Congress passed a CR to avert a government shutdown. The final CR extends government funding until November 17, 2023, and provides an extension for the Federal Aviation Administration until December 31, 2023. Ultimately,

the bill did not include funding for the border that was requested by House Republicans, nor did it include funding for Ukraine as requested by the White House. The bill passed the House [335-91](#) with 7 not voting, and in the Senate [88-9](#) with 2 not voting. Instead of recessing for the week, both chambers are in session for the first week of October to continue consideration of the FY24 appropriations bills and to elect a new Speaker of the House . The text of the CR is available [here](#).

Governor Newsom Appoints Laphonza Butler to the U.S. Senate

Following the passing of Senator Dianne Feinstein, California Governor Gavin Newsom appointed Laphonza Butler as her replacement. Feinstein's term extends until January 2025. Butler served as President of EMILY's List, an organization supporting Democratic female candidates advocating for abortion rights, which actively contributed to the 2022 election cycle. She also worked as a senior adviser to Harris's 2020 presidential campaign and has over two decades of experience in the labor movement. She was sworn into office on October 3rd.

Speaker McCarthy Ousted as Speaker

On October 2nd, Rep. Gaetz (R-FL) made a motion to remove Speaker Kevin McCarthy (R-CA) from his post. On October 3rd Speaker McCarthy was ousted from the speakership by a 216-210 vote. A speaker vacancy will stall House proceedings until a successor is chosen. Patrick McHenry (R-NC) will take over the duty of Speaker Pro-Tem and will oversee the speaker election process with limited additional responsibilities per House rules. Rep. Scalise (R-LA) and Rep. Jordan (R-OH) have announced their intention to run for House Speaker when the House reconvenes on October 10th.

Senate FAA Reauthorization Update

A long-term FAA bill was passed by the House in July, the Senate will require more time to reach a final agreement on it. The short-term FAA extension included in the CR will ensure the uninterrupted operation of all FAA programs while negotiations continue. We do still expect a House and Senate conference to finalize the FAA Reauthorization bill before the end of 2023.

Secretary Buttigieg's Transportation and Infrastructure Committee Testimony

Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg testified in front of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee on Wednesday, September 20. The hearing, titled "Oversight of the Department of Transportation's Policies and Programs," lasted over six hours.

A few relevant highlights from the hearing are as follows:

Secretary Buttigieg discussed the need for legislation related to freight rail safety, especially after the Norfolk Southern derailment in East Palestine. He called for support in

advancing legislation that ensures the safety of communities near rail lines. He highlighted the Department of Transportation's efforts, such as proposing minimum crewmember requirements for certain trains and conducting inspections on routes with high-hazard flammable trains.

Chair Graves expressed concerns about the distribution of funds under the IIJA (Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act), highlighting issues related to oversight and the pace of distribution. He mentioned the need to remove regulatory burdens and acknowledged that \$184 billion has been distributed, but there are concerns about how that money was spent.

Ranking Member Larsen raises concerns about train accidents, noting that there have been over 500 train accidents in the past seven months. He urged the committee to take more action on this issue.

Rep. Napolitano inquired about the status of railroad grade crossing safety programs and funding. She asked how the department ensures that railroad companies, state DOTs, and local governments implement these projects quickly. Buttigieg mentioned the grade crossing elimination program and its impact on safety and convenience.

Rep. Nehls expressed concerns about a high-speed rail project in California, citing cost overruns and the potential need for an Inspector General investigation. He also called for auditing the project and exploring its financial discrepancies.

Rep. Ryan commended Buttigieg for proposing recommendations under the Rail Safety Act. He highlighted concerns about toxic spills from CSX tracks in his district, emphasizing the need to prevent incidents similar to East Palestine.

Rep. Carbajal raised the issue of PFAS usage by firefighters.

Senate Environment and Public Works (EPW) Committee hearing on Extreme Heat

On September 13th, the Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works met to discuss the impact of extreme heat and weather on transportation and community resilience. They called upon representatives from cities, the labor force, and the private sector to address the issue. With the increasing frequency of extreme weather events like heatwaves, flooding, hurricanes, and wildfires causing widespread disruptions, the focus was on protecting transportation infrastructure, which can suffer damage and disruption. Witnesses, including experts from the City of Phoenix, Laborers International Union of North America, and Jacobs Solutions, emphasized the importance of climate resilience, labor concerns, and the role of government in mitigating these challenges. The complete hearing is available [HERE](#).

Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvement (CRISI) Program Selections

On September 25th, the Biden administration announced \$1.4 billion in rail infrastructure funding across 35 states and the District of Columbia through the CRISI program, expanded

by the infrastructure law. Eligible projects range from grade-crossing improvements to regional rail development, including passenger and freight rail. These projects share common themes: rural investment, rail safety, sustainable transportation, and passenger rail enhancements. More information is available [HERE](#).

FEMA Transformation Bill Introduced

On September 20th, representatives Jared Moskowitz (D-FL) and Garret Graves (R-LA) jointly introduced legislation that would make the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Director a Cabinet-level position. The proposed move aims to enhance FEMA's significance in the context of frequent national natural disasters. Representatives Moskowitz and Graves are also hoping to reform bureaucratic processes that currently impede FEMA's prompt response capabilities. A link to the bill text can be found [HERE](#).

California Delegation Sends Letter to Biden for Resources after Tropical Storm Hilary

On September 19th Representatives Ken Calvert (R-CA) and Zoe Lofgren (D-CA), along with both California Senators, united the California delegation in urging the Biden Administration to approve California's request for a major disaster declaration in the aftermath of Tropical Storm Hilary. The delegation emphasized the ongoing need for federal disaster assistance to aid residents, small businesses, and farmers affected by the storm. They urged swift action from the Biden Administration to provide essential federal resources. A link to the letter can be found [HERE](#).

Electric Vehicle Charger Reliability and Accessibility Accelerator

The Electric Vehicle Charger Reliability and Accessibility Accelerator program aims to provide funding to eligible organizations seeking to repair or replace publicly accessible electric vehicle (EV) chargers. This funding can be utilized for both publicly and privately owned charging stations. The program's primary goal is to enhance and maintain reliable EV charging infrastructure, thereby improving the nationwide availability of charging options as the automotive industry transitions toward electric vehicles. Proposed projects under this program may encompass repairing or replacing non-functional chargers, upgrading operational components of charging stations, and covering expenses directly related to the repair or replacement of malfunctioning EV charging equipment.

Eligible Entities: State Departments of Transportation and Local Governments. States and localities are encouraged to collaborate to the best extent possible to address broken and non-operational EV chargers.

Total Program Funding Available: \$100 million.

Required Cost Sharing or Match: A cost match of at least 20% is required.

Application Deadline: November 13th, 2023, at 11:59 PM EST