

Memorandum

From: Capitol Transportation Consulting and Pavluchuk & Associates
To: James Corless, Executive Director
Date: February 25, 2025
Subject: PI Report

Executive Orders + Administration Directives

President Trump and the U.S. Department of Transportation have issued a number of executive orders and various administrative directives that continue to impact MPOs. Many executive orders have a larger national significance as they impact all federal grants, but some of the directives from the U.S. DOT are much more specific to MPOs.

Funding Freeze

In January 2025, President Donald Trump issued an executive order mandating a comprehensive review of federal grant programs, leading to a temporary freeze. The stated goal was to assess and realign funding with the administration's policy priorities. Particularly, the administration wanted to review programs associated with foreign aid, diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives, and environmental projects linked to the Green New Deal.

The abrupt funding halt, affecting many grant programs including transportation grant funding, led to widespread confusion and operational disruptions across multiple sectors. The ambiguity surrounding which programs were exempt exacerbated the situation, prompting legal challenges from various stakeholders. In response to these challenges, various courts continue to address the executive order's ramifications, with federal judges consistently blocking the administration's attempts to reinstate the funding freeze.

The freeze is also holding up current negotiations on the appropriations bills, which is the annual funding bill.

Federal Review of Programs

U.S. DOT also issued a notice to all states that it will send most major planning documents to U.S. DOT for review by the Office of General Counsel. This is an unusual level of review and has not been typical in past Administrations. There has been growing concerns from MPOs across the country about the implications of this added level of review, as it's not clear what changes will be required, how long the review will take, and whether it will impact the ability of projects to advance. Some MPOs and states have reported that the Administration has asked them to remove or edit details about the project.

Secretary Duffy Policy Memo

In late January 2025, U.S. Transportation Secretary Sean Duffy issued a memorandum directing the Department of Transportation (DOT) to rescind policies from the previous administration that promoted

climate change initiatives, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) programs, and other related objectives. This action aligns with President Donald Trump's executive orders aimed at eliminating such programs.

The memo also emphasizes that all DOT policies, grants, loans, and actions should be grounded in sound economic principles and positive cost-benefit analyses, focusing on measurable benefits rather than ideological considerations.

Additionally, Secretary Duffy instructed the department to prioritize funding for communities with marriage and birth rates higher than the national average. Furthermore, the memorandum calls for the rescission of a rule requiring state transportation departments to measure and set targets for reducing carbon dioxide emissions on federally supported highways, reflecting the administration's commitment to eliminating regulatory burdens related to climate change.

Congressional Updates

The Transportation and Infrastructure Committee has shared its intent to move forward with the Surface Transportation Reauthorization. They will begin accepting recommendations from organizations and members over the coming months. This is a critical bill that funds highway, transit and planning funds that support SACOG's work. SACOG and your federal advocates have been working to finalize and advance our key priorities.

SACOG Priorities

The federal team continues to work to refine our legislative priorities for the next bill and educate our delegation members on the importance of SACOG's mission, programs, and projects. We are also regularly in contact with national associations to help amplify our message and priorities. We are particularly focused on supporting additional funding opportunities for our core planning funding and programs like Green Means Go. While the people and priorities in DC change with each Administration, we are working to advance priorities that can get bipartisan support and grow support with our key champions.

NARC Conference & Spring Advocacy

In February, we joined staff from SACOG at the National Association of Regional Council's (NARC) winter policy summit. SACOG advocate Devon Barnhart spoke at the conference regarding the upcoming transportation reauthorization. Following the panel session, we met with staff from Congresswoman Matsui's office to discuss 2025 priorities as well as the upcoming transportation reauthorization.

Also, during February, we spent time with AMPO staff discussing and preparing for two upcoming advocacy visits, the Association for Metropolitan Planning Organization policy fly-in and the annual Cap-to-Cap trip.