

Memorandum

From: Capitol Transportation Consulting and Pavluchuk & Associates

To: James Corless, Executive Director

Date: April 21, 2023

Subject: Federal Policy Monthly Report

Green Means Go

With the federal government continuing to roll out various infrastructure grants from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and Inflation Reduction Act, we continue to seek ways to support additional funding for Green Means Go (GMG). James Corless and the federal advocacy team met with US DOT to brief them on GMG and discuss next steps to help advance funding for this type of program. SACOG is currently working on recommendations for the Department.

We also met with a variety of MPOs and COGs from across the country to build support for GMG as many regions face similar challenges. We are working on additional advocacy efforts with this group in Congress and the Administration.

New Proposed Vehicle Pollution Standards

The Administration announced new proposed vehicle pollution standards to make all vehicles, including gas-powered cars and heavy-duty trucks, cleaner and more efficient. The proposed standards would protect public health by cutting nearly 10 billion tons of CO₂ emissions – twice the annual U.S. emissions today. The EPA's approach is technology-neutral, meaning that better-designed gas vehicles, hybrids, fuel cell vehicles, and other innovations could all be used to meet stricter standards. But with EV technology getting better and cheaper, many manufacturers would likely rely on fully electric vehicles for compliance. EPA estimates that by 2032, if finalized, the proposed rules could result in electrification of 67% of new sedans, crossovers, SUVs, and light trucks; 50% of new vocational vehicles (such as buses and garbage trucks); 35% of new short-haul freight tractors; and 25% of new long-haul freight tractors.

Freight Rail Safety

In the latest action to improve freight rail safety after derailments in Ohio and other states, the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) issued a new Safety Advisory (Train Makeup and Operational Safety Concerns), calling on major freight railroads to review and update their placement of rail cars and locomotives. The configuration of railcars and how cargo gets loaded can be critical to the risk of derailment. This is the sixth safety advisory the Department has issued since the February 3, 2023 Norfolk Southern derailment in East Palestine, Ohio. Additionally, the President's FY 2024 Budget calls for an investment of more than \$1 billion to expand USDOT's core rail safety efforts and improve critical infrastructure.

Roadway Fatality Report Shows Fatalities Remain Essentially Flat

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration has released its preliminary report for the motor vehicle traffic fatalities in the United States last year. Even though the numbers show a marginal decrease of around 0.3 percent compared to 2021, things are not looking good overall. Preliminary data estimates 42,795 people died in crashes in 2022 versus 42,939 the prior year. This is problematic as the numbers remain essentially flat after two years of significant increases.

Grant Update

- **Safe Streets Grants** - The [FY 2023 \(Round Two\) Notice of Funding Opportunity \(NOFO\)](#) for Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A) grants is currently live and open for applications through July 10, 2023. The SS4A program supports DOT's National Roadway Safety Strategy and the Department's goal of significantly reducing serious injuries and deaths on our Nation's roadways. In February, the Secretary announced that [510 communities received over \\$800 million](#) in the first round of SS4A grants to develop action plans and implement strategies and projects to make our transportation system safer.
- **PROTECT Grants** - DOT opened applications for the first round of the Promoting Resilient Operations for Transformative, Efficient, and Cost-Saving Transportation (PROTECT) Discretionary Grant Program. The program will invest in projects to make the country's surface transportation system – including highways, public transportation, pedestrian facilities, ports, and intercity passenger rail – more resilient to the worsening impacts of climate change, while reducing long-term costs by minimizing demands for more expensive future maintenance and rebuilding. The program prioritizes innovative and collaborative approaches to risk reduction – including approaches that harness the power of nature to protect against flood, erosion, wave damage, and heat impacts. Applications are due by August 18, 2023.

[NEW] PROTECT Grants (discretionary)

Purpose	Planning, resilience improvements, community resilience and evacuation routes, and at-risk coastal infrastructure
Funding	\$1.4 B (FY 22-26) in Contract Authority from the HTF
Eligible entities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State (or political subdivision of a State) • MPO • Local government • Special purpose district or public authority with a transportation function • Indian Tribe • Federal land management agency (applying jointly with State(s)) • <i>Different eligibilities apply for at-risk coastal infrastructure grants</i>
Eligible projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highway, transit, intercity passenger rail, and port facilities • Resilience planning activities, including resilience improvement plans, evacuation planning and preparation, and capacity-building • Construction activities (oriented toward resilience) • Construction of (or improvement to) evacuation routes
Other key provisions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Higher Federal share if the eligible entity develops a resilience improvement plan (or is in a State or area served by MPO that does) and the State or MPO incorporates it into its long-range transportation plan • May only use up to 40% of the grant for construction of new capacity

- **Green Spaces Grants** - Administration announced the availability of [\\$1 billion in grants](#) to increase equitable access to trees and green spaces in urban and community forests where more than 84% of Americans live, work and play as part of President Biden's Investing in America agenda. The funding announced is part of a \$1.5 billion investment in the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Forest Service Urban and Community Forestry Program from President Biden's Inflation Reduction Act. The grant funding is available to community-based organizations, tribes, municipal and state governments, nonprofit partners, universities, and other eligible entities as they work to increase tree cover in urban spaces and boost equitable access to nature while bolstering resilience to extreme heat, storm-induced flooding, and other climate impacts. The open application period extends from April 12, 2023 to June 1, 2023 at 11:59 p.m. EDT.
- **Wildlife Crossing Projects** - the Secretary announced that DOT is making a total of \$350 million available over five years through the Wildlife Crossings Pilot Program, including more than \$111 million in grants in the first round of funding to be awarded this year. The program, created through the BIL, makes grant funding available to states and communities to construct wildlife crossings over or below busy roads, add warning signs for drivers, acquire mapping and tracking tools, and more. Wildlife vehicle collisions are a safety issue, especially in rural areas. Each year in the U.S., roughly 200 people are killed – and many more are injured – in more than one million collisions involving wildlife and vehicles.