

Memorandum

From: Capitol Transportation Consulting and Pavluchuk & Associates

To: James Corless, Executive Director

Date: September 19, 2023

Subject: Federal Policy Monthly Report

Reconnecting Communities Applications Due

The deadline for the Reconnecting Communities grant closes on September 28th. The grants were established in the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and the Inflation Reduction Act to help fund community-led projects that mitigate physical barriers to mobility and access, as well as projects to improve walkability, safety, and affordable transportation access, particularly in low-income and disadvantaged communities. The Department will award more than \$3 billion to several different types of grants, including \$450 million to Regional Partnership Challenge Grants, designed to incentivize regions to come together to leverage both federal, state, and regional funding and policies to tackle problems.

We are working with SACOG to help scope and build support for SACOG's application for the Regional Partnership Challenge, as well as other projects from the region competing for other types of Reconnecting Communities grants.

White House Releases New Technical Assistance Resource

The White House released a new technical assistance resource guide to help communities unlock infrastructure funding. For the purposes of this guide, the White House is defining technical assistance as programs, processes, and resources that provide targeted support to a community, region, organization, or other beneficiary to help them access and deploy federal funding to deliver results. This guide helps by providing comprehensive information about more than 100 federal technical assistance programs that can support efforts to win Federal funding and deploy it in communities across the nation. It also provides similar information on the growing number of state programs designed to aid communities in winning funding under BIL and IRA.

FMCSA Announces More Than \$80 Million in Grants for Highway Safety and Truck Parking

This week, FMCSA [announced](#) more than \$80 million in grant awards from the BIL to help reduce the frequency and severity of commercial motor vehicle crashes on our nation's roadways and support truck drivers by expanding access to truck parking, investing in critical technology, improving safety in work zones, rural areas and high crash corridors, and more. Grant recipients include states, local governments, non-profit organizations, and academic institutions across the country.

FHWA Making \$100 Million Available to Improve EV Charger Reliability

Also on Wednesday, FHWA posted the [Notice of Funding Opportunity \(NOFO\)](#) for the new Electric Vehicle Charger Reliability and Accessibility Accelerator, which will provide up to \$100 million in federal funding to repair and replace existing but non-operational electric vehicle (EV) charging infrastructure. These targeted investments will complement hundreds of billions in private sector investment, support good-paying jobs across the country installing, maintaining, and repairing EV infrastructure, and make our

current charging network more reliable. The first round of funding will focus on improving the reliability of the current network by repairing or replacing existing EV charging infrastructure at the same time the Administration is making larger-scale investments to deploy new charging stations. Based on initial estimates of non-operational chargers, FHWA anticipates that the available \$100 million in funding will likely cover the repair or replacement costs of all eligible projects, which will be awarded through a streamlined application process. This includes both publicly and privately owned chargers – so long as they are available to the public without restriction. **Applications are due by November 13, 2023.**

FY 2024 Appropriation Update

Amended 10/1/2023

With just hours left before the government shut down, Congress was able to clear a continuing resolution that will fund the government – including USDOT – into the middle of November. The unexpected action came after House Speaker Kevin McCarthy (R-CA) brought up a clean extension and passed it with more than half of Republicans voting for it and nearly all Democrats. The Senate quickly took up the legislation and it was signed into law before the end of the fiscal year.

The action did not come without cost to Speaker McCarthy, no less than a few days later, Congressman Matt Gaetz (R-FL) introduced a motion to vacate the Chair which ultimately removed Congressman McCarthy from Speaker. There was some thought that moderate Democrats would work out a deal with the former Speaker, but McCarthy's outright refusal to make any concessions to moderates killed any hopes. It was widely expected that even if Gaetz's motion to vacate the Chair passed (which it did), Congressman McCarthy would continue to fight to get re-elected as Speaker. However, hours after the motion to vacate the Chair passed, Congressman McCarthy announced that he would not seek the role of Speaker unleashing pure chaos.

As it currently stands, the House does not have real leadership. Congressman Patrick McHenry (R-NC), a McCarthy ally, is the interim Speaker, but the House will need to elect a full-time Speaker in the coming days and weeks. Republicans are falling into two separate camps; mainstream Republicans (75%-80%) are rallying behind Congressman Scalise (R-LA) for Speaker while others (20%) are rallying behind Freedom Caucus founder Jim Jordan (R-OH).

It is tough to tell what will happen because this is an unprecedented occasion, only once before was there an attempt to vacate the Chair and that failed (more than 100 years ago). There is no standing policy or procedure on when and how to move forward. So, to say there is a clear path is not possible. The most optimistic path is that Republicans will caucus and get behind one candidate or the other and agree to support that Member – but if just 4 Republicans defect; everything would fall apart.

This impacts the FY 2024 budget in two ways. First, the longer there is chaos in the House, the less time the House and Senate have to figure out a pathway for FY 2024 spending. Second, who becomes Speaker, and under what terms may impact the spending package. There were several Republican Members who were actively hoping for a government shutdown. Others were against passing any budget unless draconian spending cuts were made (30%+ in non-defense spending was being discussed as 'not enough'). We will continue to update and advise SACOG staff as to the process as it unfolds and will continue to provide insight as to possible impacts on SACOG interests.