

# Holland & Knight

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## **Broward Metropolitan Planning Organization FEDERAL UPDATE August 2015**

Both the House and Senate were in recess during the month of August. The House adjourned on July 30, and the Senate adjourned on August 6. Both chambers are expected to reconvene on September 8, 2015.

Congressional Outlook: When Congress returns from the August recess, it will have roughly two weeks of legislative days to tackle a list of must-do items. The current fiscal year ends September 30, as does the authorization for the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA). Given the short timeframe that lawmakers will have, it is increasingly likely that they will have to pass a continuing resolution (CR), which would extend current funding levels for a short period of time until a larger omnibus appropriations package can be drafted.

Lawmakers need to not only prevent the federal government from shutting down, but also must vote on the Iran nuclear deal, complete work on cybersecurity legislation and finally the House must move forward on their surface transportation authorization bill in order to conference a bill with the Senate prior to the October 29 deadline.

FTA Announces Proposed Rule to Establish New Public Transportation Safety Program: On August 18, the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) announced a proposed rule to establish a new Public Transportation Safety Program. According to the Department of Transportation (DOT), the rule would create a framework for FTA to “monitor, oversee and enforce safety in the public transit industry, and is based on the principles and practices of Safety Management Systems (SMS).”

Specifically, the FTA would use its new oversight established in the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP-21) to conduct inspections, audits, and examinations; testing of equipment, facilities, rolling stock, and the operations of public transit systems; and for FTA to take certain enforcement actions.

FTA Acting Administrator Therese McMillan said, “With transit ridership at its highest levels in generations, and our nation’s transit agencies facing increased pressure to meet the demand for service, we must continue to ensure that safety remains the top priority.” She added, “This rulemaking is a major step forward in establishing FTA’s safety regulatory framework, as all future safety-related rules, regulations and guidance will be informed by the Public Transportation Safety Program”

Public comments on the proposed rule are being accepted until October 13, 2015. The FTA’s proposed rule on transit safety can be found in the *Federal Register* [here](#).

Pilot Program for Expedited Project Delivery Deadline Extension: The deadline for proposal submissions under FTA’s Pilot Program for Expedited Project Delivery has been extended until September 8, 2015. The extension has been issued due to a technical error with the submission email account.

The pilot program is aimed at increasing innovation, improving efficiency and timeliness of project implementation, and encouraging new revenue streams for new fixed guideway projects and core capacity improvement projects. Additional information about the Pilot Program for Expedited Project Delivery can be found in the *Federal Register* [here](#).

Departments of Transportation, Education, and Labor Release Joint Transportation Jobs Report: On August 24, the Departments of Transportation, Education, and Labor released a joint report entitled “Strengthening Skills Training and Career Pathways Across the Transportation Industry.” The joint report aims to project the employment and skill needs of the transportation industry over the next 10 years. The report is also being presented “as a blueprint to the field for aligning investments in transportation with high-quality career pathways programs that can create ladders of opportunity”.

The report analyzes six transportation subsectors: trucking; transit and ground passenger; air; highway construction and maintenance; rail; and maritime transportation. The report found that the transportation sector is projected to add 417,000 new jobs from 2012 to 2022 due to industry growth. However, this growth is expected to occur in all but two states – Kentucky and Vermont are expected to experience a slight decline of 1 percent. The fastest growth is expected to occur on the West Coast, the Gulf Coast, the upper Mid-Atlantic, a number of Mountain States, and the Midwest.

The agencies also found that from 2012 to 2022, an additional 4.2 million transportation workers will need to be hired due to occupational transfers, retirement, and other exits from the industry. 53 percent of the current transportation workforce are 45 years or older, highlighting this need even further. According to the report, a majority of the regional transportation job growth is driven by growth in the large metropolitan areas within those regions (the highest number of job openings likely generated in New York City, Dallas, Los Angeles, Houston, and Chicago).

Career pathways models are also detailed in the report, which encourage: (1) building cross-agency partnerships and clarifying roles; (2) identifying sector or industry and engaging employers; (3) designing education and training programs; (4) identifying funding needs and sources; (5) aligning policies and programs; and (6) measuring system change and performance.

The “Strengthening Skills Training and Career Pathways Across the Transportation Industry” joint report can be found [here](#).

Traffic Deaths up 14% in First Six Months of 2015, According to the National Safety Council: In a report entitled “NSC Motor Vehicle Fatality Estimates,” the National Safety Council (NSC) estimated that motor-vehicle deaths for January through June of 2015 totaled 18,630 – 14% greater than the same period in 2014. If current trends continue, 2015 may become the deadliest

year on record since 2007 and could exceed 40,000 motor-vehicle deaths. Vehicle injuries have also increased 30 percent since last year, with a total of roughly 2.3 million injuries.

In Florida, the NSC estimates that the state experienced a 29 percent increase in fatalities in 2015 when compared to 2014. Specifically, there were 1,441 motor-vehicle deaths in the same six-month period in 2015, compared to 1,114 the previous year. However, the report also states that Florida experienced a marginally smaller 23 percent increase in fatalities when comparing the 1,441 deaths in 2015 to the 1,172 reported deaths in 2013.

NRC estimates that the total cost of these motor vehicle-related deaths, injuries, and property damage totals approximately \$152 billion. This figure is calculated based on estimated wage and productivity losses, medical and administrative expenses, employer costs, and property damage.

NRC predicts that the increase in motor-vehicle deaths and injuries could be a consequence of lower real gas prices, which have averaged 30 percent below 2014 levels. As a result, more drivers are on the road, increasing the probability of death or injury. However, the report also added, “gas prices and the economy are strongly connected and it is difficult to isolate the impact of lower gas prices from the overall impact of an improving economy.” NRC estimates that there was a 3.4 percent increase in cumulative vehicle mileage reported through May.

According to the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), vehicles in the U.S. achieved 1.54 trillion vehicle miles traveled within the first six months of 2015. This represents “more than double the amount driven during the same period in 1981, continuing a trend of America’s driving mileage doubling nearly every generation.” The previous record of 1.5 trillion miles was set in June 2007.

The NSC Motor Vehicle Fatality report can be found [here](#).

Texas A&M Transportation Institute Publishes Congestion Study: On August 26, the Texas A&M Transportation Institute (TTI) published its 2015 Urban Mobility Scorecard. The report examined traffic congestion in 471 urban areas across the United States to evaluate the impact of traffic on urban areas and provide insight on future trends.

The report found that traffic congestion has caused urban Americans to travel an extra 6.9 billion hours and purchase an extra 3.1 billion gallons of fuel for a total congestion cost of \$160 billion. The report also found that 95 of America’s 100 largest metro areas experienced an increase in congestion. The report examined 20 urban areas throughout Florida.

The report calls for a “balanced and diversified” approach to reducing congestion, which TTI acknowledges will vary between urban areas. The complete 2015 Urban Mobility Scorecard can be found [here](#).