

Legislative Update

April 4, 2025

FROM WASHINGTON, D.C.

The Senate Environment and Public Works Committee met on April 2 to begin discussions on the upcoming surface transportation authorization bill. With the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act set to expire in September 2026, lawmakers in both chambers are working early to allow sufficient time for new ideas and programs to be explored. Secretary Duffy attended the meeting to provide the Department of Transportation's perspective on which programs should be continued. Key topics included bipartisan efforts on permitting reform, safety, and maintaining the steady flow of grant funding. Chair Capito noted that this was the first of two scheduled hearings focused on the new surface bill.

On April 2, Senate Republicans introduced a budget blueprint aimed at advancing President Donald Trump's legislative agenda. The proposal includes over \$2 trillion in non-defense spending cuts over the next decade and raises the nation's borrowing limit by \$5 trillion, increasing the total U.S. debt to \$36.6 trillion. It also allocates an additional \$150 billion for military spending and \$175 billion to enhance border security. Senate Majority Leader John Thune emphasized the importance of adopting this resolution to further Republican legislative goals. The blueprint's passage is essential for enabling the budget reconciliation process, allowing Republicans to pass key legislation later in the year without support from Senate Democrats.

FROM AUSTIN

The House Transportation Funding Subcommittee met on March 31 at 10 am to hear testimony from key agencies and review several bills of interest. The North Texas Tolling Authority (NTTA), represented by James Hofmann, presented on its origins, mission, projects, customer data, revenue, capital plan, and debt profile. HJR 58 (Bucy) proposes a constitutional amendment allowing the use of state highway funds for transit-oriented projects, giving TxDOT more flexibility in funding transit options beyond highways. HJR 63 (Walle) similarly proposes a constitutional amendment to permit broader uses of state highway funds, as currently, 90% of transportation funds are allocated to highways. HB 542 (Bucy) serves as the enabling legislation for HJR 58. HB 1288 (Landgraf) relates to discretionary funding decisions of the Texas Transportation Commission (TTC). The original bill would have entirely removed the 10% cap on Category 12 discretionary funding, but the committee substitute instead raises the cap from 10% to 20%, allowing for greater flexibility. HB 1402 (Harris) prohibits the use of public funds to alter roadways for high-speed rail construction. Harris noted that Texas Central Partners has acquired land along the proposed route while failing to pay property taxes, and that the company has sought local government agreements to fund road alterations for its project, which HB 1402 aims to prevent. Andy Jent, representing Texas Central Partners, testified against the bill, stating that financial plans have changed due to COVID-19 and federal funding efforts. HB 2262 (Turner) is a transparency bill requiring the installation and maintenance of real-time dynamic message signs on tolled lanes, including toll prices, travel times for tolled lanes, and travel times for non-tolled lanes. HB 2323 (Shaheen) seeks to end perpetual tolling by mandating that tolls be removed once the road's debt is paid off. Once repaid, the road would either be incorporated into the state highway system or maintained by the county, preventing indefinite toll payments while ensuring toll roads remain self-funded. HB 3019 (Cain) would impose additional scrutiny and accountability measures before metropolitan transit authorities can request or receive federal funding for projects. The bill specifically addresses concerns over Austin's Capital Metro light rail project, restricting its ability to apply for federal funds until Austin resolves issues related to homelessness and camping bans. All bills were left pending.

The Senate Transportation Committee met on April 2 at 8 am to review and approve several bills of interest. SB 1493 (Parker) codifies Texas Department of Public Safety (TxDPS) guidance on flashing stop lamps, ensuring consistency with federal standards and new vehicle designs. SB 1919 (West) increases TxDOT's internal liability claim settlement limit to enhance efficiency. SB 2039 (Hancock) extends pedestrian right-of-way laws to small vehicles such as bicycles, electric bicycles, and electric personal assistive mobility devices for safety. SB 2226 (Nichols) lowers the local match requirement for aviation facility grants in economically disadvantaged counties, expanding funding access. SB 2425 (Nichols) regulates commercial automated vehicles (AV), clarifies enforcement authority, and aligns Texas law with national AV standards. A committee substitute for SB 2425 was approved to refine definitions and address stakeholder concerns.

The House Transportation Committee met on April 3 at 8 am to review several bills of interest. HB 1564 (Hernandez) proposes limiting train lengths to 8500 feet to reduce blocked thoroughfares. HB 1722 (Tepper) seeks to protect property owners' access to land adjacent to TxDOT right-of-way. HB 1772 (Bhojani) would strengthen railroad crossing safety by increasing penalties for drivers that intentionally violate warnings. HB 3134 (Cook) aims to develop a statewide plan for advanced air mobility in collaboration with federal and local stakeholders. HB 3309 (Canales) addresses automated traffic control systems. HB 3727 (Patterson) focuses on funding rail grade separation projects to improve safety. All remain pending. Additionally, the committee considered HB 2003 (Harris). HB 2003 would require Texas Central Partners to disclose key financial and operational details about its high-speed rail project by adding it to the Transportation Rail Plan. During testimony, Andy Jent, representing Texas Central Partners, faced scrutiny over the project's financial transparency, funding sources, and long-term feasibility. Lawmakers pressed Jent on Amtrak's involvement, financial disclosures, and whether the company had a concrete funding strategy. Jent argued that requiring detailed disclosures at this stage would be premature and could mislead the public. However, legislators expressed concerns about the lack of transparency, with some questioning the company's ability to secure federal grants without clear financial details. Ultimately, Rep. Little motioned to subpoena Texas Central Partner's documents, and the motion passed.

HIGHLIGHTED BILLS WITH ACTION

- SB 1 Huffman, General Appropriations Bill. Voted favorably out of the House Appropriations Committee, set on the House Calendar for Thursday, April 10.

UPCOMING COMMITTEE HEARINGS

TEXAS SENATE

- The Senate Transportation Committee will meet on Wednesday, April 9, at 8 am. The Committee will meet to consider the following bills of interest:
 - SB 2129 Relating to the operation of vehicles at railroad grade crossings
 - SB 2722 Relating to the use of certain tolls and charges imposed by certain counties

US HOUSE

- The House Transportation and Infrastructure Subcommittee on Aviation will meet on April 8 to discuss airport infrastructure, safety, and the regulatory environment
- The House Transportation and Infrastructure Subcommittee on Highways and Transit will meet on April 9 to review transit policies and programs

RECENT COMMITTEE HEARINGS

TEXAS HOUSE

- Transportation Funding Subcommittee (March 31)
 - HJR 58 Proposing a constitutional amendment authorizing the use of money in the state highway fund for transit-oriented projects (Pending)
 - HJR 63 Proposing a constitutional amendment to permit additional uses of certain dedicated general revenue transferred each fiscal year to the state highway fund (Pending)
 - HB 542 Relating to the use of certain money transferred to and deposited in the state highway fund as required by the Texas Constitution (Pending)
 - HB 1288 Relating to discretionary funding decisions of the Texas Transportation Commission (Pending)
 - HB 1402 Relating to a prohibition on the use of public money to pay for the alteration of a roadway related to high-speed rail construction (Pending)
 - HB 2262 Relating to the installation and maintenance of dynamic message signs for certain tolled lanes operated by a toll project entity (Pending)
 - HB 3019 Relating to the authority of certain metropolitan rapid transit authorities and related entities to request and receive federal funds (Pending)
- Appropriations (March 31)
 - SB 1 General Appropriations Bill (Approved)
- Judiciary and Civil Jurisprudence (April 2)
 - HB 3223 Relating to statutes of limitation and repose for certain claims involving the construction or repair of an improvement to real property (Approved)
- Natural Resources (April 2)
 - HB 16 Relating to the oversight and financing of certain water infrastructure matters under the jurisdiction of the Texas Water Development Board (Pending)
- Delivery of Government Efficiency (April 2)
 - HB 2248 Relating to the public information law (Pending)
 - HB 3112 Relating to the application of the open meetings law and public information law to government information related to certain cybersecurity measures (Pending)
 - HB 3512 Relating to artificial intelligence training programs for certain employees and officials of state agencies and local governments (Pending)
- State Affairs (April 2)
 - HB 1360 Relating to certain regulations adopted by governmental entities for the construction or alteration of residential or commercial buildings (Pending)
 - HB 3272 Relating to the operation of an unmanned aircraft over a spaceport (Pending)
- Transportation (April 3)
 - HB 1564 Relating to the maximum length of a train (Pending)
 - HB 1722 Relating to an owner's or lessee's access to private property located within a Texas Department of Transportation highway right-of-way (Pending)
 - HB 1772 Relating to the operation of vehicles at railroad grade crossings; increasing a criminal penalty (Pending)
 - HB 2003 Relating to provision to the Texas Department of Transportation of information regarding certain high-speed rail projects
 - HB 3134 Relating to advanced air mobility (Pending)
 - HB 3309 Relating to the use of automated traffic control systems by local authorities and law enforcement agencies (Pending)

- HB 3727 Relating to a grant program to fund certain railroad grade separation projects (Pending)
- Environmental Regulation (April 3)
 - HB 1768 Relating to the construction, expansion, or modification of certain concrete plants under a standard permit (Pending)
- Land and Resource Management (April 3)
 - HB 1322 Relating to municipal approval of subdivision plans or plats in certain municipalities (Pending)
 - HB 2225 Relating to the approval of land use assumptions, capital improvement plans, and impact fees (Pending)
 - HB 3919 Relating to size and density requirements for residential lots in certain municipalities (Pending)
- Criminal Jurisprudence (April 3)
 - HB 1713 Relating to increasing the criminal penalty for the offense of criminal mischief involving impairment of electric vehicle supply equipment

TEXAS SENATE

- Local Government (March 31)
 - SB 1708 Relating to the effect of the model subdivision rules on an exception to county platting requirements applicable to the extraterritorial jurisdiction of a municipality (Pending)
 - SB 2238 Relating to the authority of a county or municipality to prohibit or restrict use of a certain mode of transportation on a roadway (Pending)
- Criminal Justice (April 1)
 - SB 826 Relating to the operation of a motor vehicle in a school crossing zone while intoxicated (Approved)
 - SB 2320 Relating to increasing the criminal punishment for certain driving while intoxicated offenses (Approved)
- Business and Commerce (April 1)
 - SB 776 Relating to the award of compensatory damages caused by certain delays under governmental construction contracts (Pending)
 - SB 2321 Relating to the regulation of emissions by the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality during an event affecting electric demand or grid reliability (Pending)
- Veteran Affairs (April 1)
 - SB 1197 Relating to the operation of an unmanned aircraft over a spaceport (Approved)
 - SB 1271 Relating to the concurrent jurisdiction of this state over United States military installations with respect to certain subject matters (Pending)
- Transportation (April 2)
 - SB 1365 Relating to vehicle registration, license plates, and inspection reports (Heard last meeting, approved today)
 - SB 1394 Relating to weight and tire load restrictions for the operation of a vehicle transporting ready-mixed concrete on a public highway (Heard last meeting, approved today)
 - SB 1493 Relating to lighting equipment requirements for motor vehicles (Approved)
 - SB 1919 Relating to the authority of the Texas Department of Transportation to settle certain claims (Approved)

- SB 2039 Relating to the applicability of certain pedestrian laws to certain sidewalk users (Approved)
- SB 2226 Relating to requirements for loans or grants provided by the Texas Transportation Commission to aviation facilities located in economically disadvantaged counties (Approved)
- SB 2425 Relating to the regulation of automated motor vehicles (Approved)
- Business and Commerce (April 3)
 - SB 668 Relating to the disclosure of information with regard to artificial intelligence (Pending)
 - SB 986 Relating to procedures under public information law, including expedited responses and charges for bad faith requests (Pending)
 - SB 1964 Relating to the regulation and use of artificial intelligence systems and the management of data by governmental entities (Pending)

US SENATE

- The Senate Environment and Public Works Committee met on April 2 to discuss the upcoming surface authorization bill.