

## **Legislative Update**

### **March 6, 2025**

#### **FROM WASHINGTON, D.C.**

##### **House Aviation Hearing**

On March 4, the House Transportation and Infrastructure Subcommittee on Aviation met to discuss challenges in air traffic control infrastructure and staffing. Many of the subcommittee's questions addressed inefficiencies within the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) in recruiting and retaining highly qualified air traffic controllers. A witness from the agency overseeing U.S. air traffic controllers assured lawmakers that the rigorous training process ensures America has the best air traffic control professionals in the world and should not face funding cuts or efficiency-driven directives. Funding and modernization were also central topics, with members questioning the FAA's difficulties in long-term planning and effective project delivery. Witnesses unanimously advocated for improved funding mechanisms, increased oversight of procurement practices, and the modernization of the FAA's outdated technology.

##### **House Energy and Commerce on Broadband**

On March 5, the House Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Communications and Technology met to discuss broadband programs established under the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA). The hearing focused on the Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) program, with members subjecting it to rigorous questioning. The majority criticized the program for being slow, costly, and burdened with excessive red tape, while the minority emphasized the progress made in advancing states through the 14-step process toward statewide connectivity. Both sides acknowledged the program's permitting challenges and bureaucratic inefficiencies. However, they could not reach a consensus on whether to completely overhaul and rebuild the program from scratch or to refine and build upon its existing progress.

##### **Buy America Requirements for Manufactured Products**

AGENCY: Federal Highway Administration (FHWA); U.S. Department of Transportation

ACTION: Final rule; delay of effective date

SUMMARY: This document delays the effective date of the final rule, published on January 14, 2025, titled Buy America Requirements for Manufactured Products. This effective date of the rule amending 23 CFR part 635 published on January 14, 2025, is delayed until March 20, 2025.

[Federal Register :: Buy America Requirements for Manufactured Products](#)

#### **FROM AUSTIN**

The House Transportation Committee held its first meeting of the legislative session on March 6 at 8 am. The Committee heard invited testimony from the Texas Department of Transportation and the Texas Department of Motor Vehicles. TxDMV received a lot of questions on the metal license plates law, which will go into effect on July 1, 2025. The Department reassured members that they have developed a new distribution process, contracted with logistic vendors for all dealers in the state, and developed an inventory management system.

The Senate Transportation Committee will hold its first meeting of the session next Wednesday and will consider legislation including SB 1555, which would create a grant program to fund railroad grade separation projects. Additional information can be found below under Upcoming Committee Hearings.

#### **HIGHLIGHTED BILLS**

**Air Quality**

SB 1799 Middleton – Relating to revision or elimination of the motor vehicle emissions inspection and maintenance program. Would review the current motor vehicle emissions inspection and maintenance program, revise the State Implementation Plan to only include a minimum program, and submit for EPA approval.

**High-Speed Rail**

HB 1769 Cook – Relating to the use of state money for high-speed rail operated by a private entity and to the construction of certain high-speed rail. Would mandate TxDOT to partner with a private entity for the construction and operation of high-speed rail connecting Houston to Austin, using state funds, and defines high-speed rail as intercity passenger service expected to reach speeds of at least 110 miles per hour.

**Safety**

SB 1770 Cook – Relating to the accommodation of pedestrians, bicyclists, persons with disabilities, children, senior citizens, users of public transportation, movers of commercial goods, and motorists on streets and highways. Would mandate TxDOT and local authorities to implement a "complete streets" policy that ensures the safety, accessibility, and mobility of all users—pedestrians, bicyclists, public transportation users, commercial movers, and motorists—are considered in all transportation projects.

**Revenue**

HJR 164 Lowe – Proposing a constitutional amendment prohibiting the imposition of a vehicle mileage tax or fee. Would propose a constitutional amendment to prohibit the Texas legislature from imposing a tax or fee on individuals based on the number of miles they travel in a motor vehicle within the state.

**TxDOT**

SB 35/SB 1655 Nichols – Relating to design build contracts. Would reduce the number of design-build projects the Texas Department of Transportation could perform in a biennium from six to two.

HB 3849 Canales – Relating to the program categories in the Unified Transportation Program. Would create a category for projects related to improving border security and establishing international trade corridors.

**UPCOMING COMMITTEE HEARINGS****TEXAS SENATE**

- The Senate Transportation Committee will meet on Wednesday, March 12, at 8am. The Committee will meet to consider and adopt the Committee Rules, and conduct any other organizational business deemed necessary by the Chair, and consider the following bills of interest:
  - SB 35 Relating to design build contracts
  - SB 305 Relating to the criminal offense of passing certain vehicles on a highway
  - SB 1555 Relating to a grant program to fund certain railroad grade separation projects
- The Senate Natural Resources Committee will meet on Wednesday, March 12, at 9am. The Committee will meet to consider the following bills of interest:
  - SB 763 Relating to the renewal and review of standard permits for certain concrete plants

**TEXAS HOUSE**

- The House Transportation Funding Subcommittee will meet on Monday, March 10, and 10am. The Committee will meet for an organizational hearing for invited testimony only, including TxDOT, the Harris County Toll Road Authority, and the Cameron County Regional Mobility Authority.

#### **RECENT COMMITTEE HEARINGS**

##### **US HOUSE**

- On March 4, the House Transportation and Infrastructure Subcommittee on Aviation met to discuss the air traffic controller shortage and safety concerns facing the flying public.
- On March 5, the House Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Communication and Technology met to discuss the progress of nationwide broadband connectivity under the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA).

##### **TEXAS HOUSE**

- On March 6, the House Transportation Committee met for an organizational hearing and heard testimony from TxDOT and TxDMV. The summary is discussed above.