

**Metropolitan Transportation Commission and Association of Bay Area Governments
Joint MTC ABAG Legislation Committee**

May 10, 2024

Agenda Item 4a

Washington D.C. Legislative Update

Subject:

April 2024 Report from Washington, D.C. advocate.

Issues:

None identified.

Recommendations:

Information

Attachments:

- Attachment A: Summit Strategies Team Report – April 2024


Alix A. Bockelman



SUMMIT
STRATEGIES

440 1st Street, N.W., Suite 440
Washington, DC 20001
(202) 638-3307 main
(202) 595-9192 fax
www.summitstrategies.us

Summit Strategies Team Report – April 2024

From: Summit Strategies Team

To: Andrew B. Fremier, Executive Director

Date: May 1, 2024

Subject: April Federal Policy Monthly Report

- **Supporting MTC Priorities in Congress**
 - **Capital Investment Grants (CIG) Guidance Announced**
 - **Cole Ushers in New Era for Earmarks**
 - **Foreign Aid Package Passes**
 - **National Transportation News Roundup**
-

Below is a status update on issues of interest to MTC and the actions that we have taken to date.

Supporting MTC Priorities in Congress

The DC team is working diligently to organize MTC-ABAG's May Washington D.C. Advocacy Trip. We are working with Members of Congress, committee staff, and the Biden Administration to arrange meetings. The team is also supporting MTC in planning the annual California Transportation Reception.

In addition to these advocacy efforts, MTC staff and the D.C. team had an introductory meeting with Ann Shikany, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Climate at the U.S. Department of Transportation, to discuss MTC's ongoing resilience and climate work.

The DC team also thanked members of the Bay Area Congressional Delegation for their work in helping MTC secure a \$20 million Resilience Improvement grant for the Resilient S.R. 37 – Sears Point to Mare Island Improvement Project under the Promoting Resilient Operations for Transformative, Efficient, and Cost-Saving Transportation (PROTECT) Program that was part of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL).

Capital Investment Grants (CIG) Guidance Announced

On April 5, 2024, the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) announced proposed updated policy guidance for the CIG program. The policy guidance outlines the process applicants must follow to be considered for CIG funding, procedures, and criteria FTA uses to evaluate and rate projects. Proposed changes to the CIG guidance include:

- Extensions of time in the Project Development phase must be requested three months before the scheduled end, will be limited to no more than one year, and are being combined with “postponement of entry into Engineering.”
- Overhauling the Land Use measure to make its factors more qualitative.
- Updating FTA's Cost Effectiveness breakpoints for post-COVID ridership and inflation. The proposed range runs from below \$8 per rider to rate “high” and over \$35 per rider to score low.
- Changing the social cost of carbon—FTA proposes using a \$51 per ton estimate.
- Changing the way FTA counts energy use reductions.

- Increasing how much affordable housing is weighted in its rating criteria.
- Making New Starts project requests that fall below a certain dollar threshold and meet certain ridership targets automatically qualified for medium ratings.

The [announcement in the Federal Register](#)

(<https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2024/04/05/2024-07218/notice-of-availability-of-proposed-policy-guidance-for-the-capital-investment-grants-program>) also poses three new questions for stakeholders:

- Should FTA add a measure of walkability to the New Starts and Small Starts land use criteria?
- For New Starts and Small Starts projects, should FTA use the U.S. Department of Transportation Equitable Transportation Community (ETC) Explorer to explore the cumulative burden communities experience due to underinvestment in transportation?
- Should FTA do more to increase the relative weight of zoning as part of the Economic Development rating?

Comments on the guidance are due June 4.

Cole Ushers in New Era for Earmarks

House Appropriations Chair Tom Cole (R-OK) has announced Fiscal Year 2025 appropriations guidance. In a change from last year's guidance, non-profits will no longer be able to apply to the Economic Development Initiative (EDI) account in the Transportation, Housing and Urban Development and Related Agencies (THUD) spending bill and congressionally directed spending requests will no longer be able to fund planning and administrative activities in the THUD spending bill.

Foreign Aid Package Passes

After months of negotiations, the U.S. House of Representatives passed legislation that will send foreign aid to Ukraine, Israel, and Taiwan. In three separate votes, the House overwhelmingly approved \$60 billion for Ukraine, \$26 billion for Israel, humanitarian aid for civilians in conflict zones, and \$8 billion for the Indo-Pacific region. In a fourth vote, the House passed a measure that will force ByteDance to divest from TikTok and a measure that will make it easier for the U.S. to sell off frozen Russian assets. The four bills were approved in the Senate and signed by President Joe Biden.

Speaker of the House Mike Johnson's (R-LA) decision to move on the foreign aid package led several GOP members, including Representative Marjorie Taylor Greene (R-GA), to file a motion calling for him to be ousted, which failed.

National Transportation News Roundup (links to articles)

- [U.S. Joint Office of Energy and Transportation issues \\$54 million NOFO for Communities Taking Charge Accelerator \(Mass Transit\)](https://www.rideprt.org/inside-Pittsburgh-Regional-Transit/about-us/)
<https://www.rideprt.org/inside-Pittsburgh-Regional-Transit/about-us/>
- [Proposed new agency would combine Chicago Transit Authority, Metra, Pace \(CBS\)](https://www.cbsnews.com/chicago/news/combine-chicago-transit-authority-metra-pace/)
<https://www.cbsnews.com/chicago/news/combine-chicago-transit-authority-metra-pace/>
- [Metro Transit reports improvement in ridership, crime \(Axios\)](https://www.axios.com/local/twin-cities/2024/04/29/twin-cities-transit-crime-ridership)
<https://www.axios.com/local/twin-cities/2024/04/29/twin-cities-transit-crime-ridership>
- [Top 10 Public Transit Cities in the U.S. \(Planetizen\)](https://www.planetizen.com/news/2024/04/128702-top-10-public-transit-cities-us)
<https://www.planetizen.com/news/2024/04/128702-top-10-public-transit-cities-us>
- [Gov. Polis announces major oil and gas truce in exchange for transit funding \(CPR News\)](https://www.cpr.org/2024/04/29/major-oil-gas-truce-in-exchange-for-transit-funding/)
<https://www.cpr.org/2024/04/29/major-oil-gas-truce-in-exchange-for-transit-funding/>