

Legislative Update

March 14, 2025

FROM WASHINGTON, D.C.

Government Funding

On March 11, Republicans in the House managed to get a new, year-long continuing resolution (CR) passed with a close margin of 217-213. This new CR brings \$13 billion in cuts to federal non-defense spending in line with the Administration's goals to create a leaner and more efficient federal workforce, and a \$6 billion increase in defense spending. The cuts are mostly earmarked projects that were included in draft FY25 funding bills. Alongside a plethora of "anomalies", this CR keeps the government funded at FY24 levels for the rest of the fiscal year and kicks the task of appropriations bills to FY26. The bill now moves to the upper chamber where Senators are locked in a "take it or leave it" deal due to the House going on recess after passage in the lower chamber. Republican Senators will need to attract 8 Democrats to join them in efforts to pass due to the 60-vote threshold. Government funding ends at midnight, March 14.

Deputy Transportation Secretary

On March 11, Steven Bradbury was confirmed by the Senate as the U.S. Deputy Secretary of Transportation. His nomination advanced from committee along party lines and was approved by the full Senate with a 51-46 vote. In his role, Bradbury will oversee the department's daily operations, including safety regulations, finance, and legislative initiatives.

FROM AUSTIN

The House Transportation Funding Subcommittee held its first meeting of the legislative session on March 10 at 10 am. The Subcommittee heard invited testimony from the Texas Department of Transportation, the Harris County Toll Road Authority, and the Cameron County Regional Mobility Authority. In their presentation, TxDOT representatives Marc Williams and Steven Stuart outlined funding sources, including HB 1, Propositions 1 and 7, and federal funds, noting that rising costs and declining cash reserves are affecting long-term infrastructure planning. Mr. Williams raised concerns about the outdated motor fuel tax and acknowledged the Representative's comments on the impact of commercial vehicles on road deterioration and funding disparities for regions with significant economic contributions but lower population-based allocations. Representatives questioned delays in project execution, utility relocation, and the role of MPOs in funding decisions. TxDOT acknowledged these challenges, emphasizing the need for legislative action to secure sustainable funding solutions and expedite project timelines.

Additionally, The Senate Transportation Committee held its first meeting of the legislative session on March 12 at 8 am. The Committee considered and adopted the Committee Rules and considered many bills of interest. The committee advanced several key bills with unanimous (9-0) approval to the full Senate. SB 35 (Nichols), SB 305 (Perry), SB 857 (Schwertner), SB 995 (Nichols), and SB 1902 (Nichols) were all reported favorably without amendments. SB 1555 (Nichols), which creates a grant program for railroad grade separation projects, had a committee substitute adopted to clarify funding provisions, remove direct payments to railroad companies, and ensure competitive bidding under Chapter 223 of the Transportation Code before passing out of committee. All bills will now move forward for further consideration.

MONITORED BILLS LIST

If you need information on the state or federal bills being tracked, please contact Jackie Nolasco.

- A table of state bills related to the RTC Legislative Program can be found [here](#).
- [Texas Legislature](#)
- [US Congress](#)

HIGHLIGHTED BILLS

Transit

SB 2118 Parker – Relating to the composition and authority of certain subregional boards of regional transportation authorities. Would restructure the composition and authority of subregional boards of regional transportation authorities in Texas, including provisions for member appointments, board officer rotations, and staggered terms. Each DART member city would have a member on the board, except for Dallas, which would get three votes.

Construction

SB 2092 Cook – Relating to establishing a highway construction mitigation program for certain highway construction projects. Would establish a highway construction mitigation program to address and reduce the negative impacts of state highway construction projects on nearby neighborhoods and structures.

Air Quality

HB 4192 Hayes – Relating to the registration and inspection of vehicles. Would revise the registration and emissions inspection process for vehicles in Texas, establish new fee structures and extend the vehicle registration period to 24 months for certain vehicles, while simplifying and consolidating related statutory provisions.

HB 4519 Ordaz – Relating to programs established and funded under the Texas emissions reduction plan. Would revise funding allocations and program structures under TERP, emphasizing grants for alternative fuel vehicles, infrastructure, and congestion mitigation while eliminating existing programs for alternative fueling facilities and natural gas vehicles.

Safety

HB 4417 Gamez – Relating to the use of certain money from the State Highway Fund for certain projects in the Safe Routes to School Program. Would permit the use of State Highway Fund money, not mandated by the Texas Constitution or federal law for public roadways, to finance eligible projects for the construction and replacement of sidewalks under the Safe Routes to School Program.

UPCOMING COMMITTEE HEARINGS

TEXAS HOUSE

- The House Transportation Committee will meet on Thursday, March 20, at 8am. The Committee will meet to consider the following bills of interest:
 - HB 408 Relating to the awarding of contracts by the Texas Department of Transportation for certain materials used in road construction projects
 - HB 1607 Relating to license plates and license plate windshield insignia issued for and displayed on a vehicle

RECENT COMMITTEE HEARINGS

TEXAS HOUSE

- On March 6, the House Transportation Funding Subcommittee met for an organizational hearing and heard testimonies from TxDOT, the Harris County Toll Road Authority, and the Cameron County Regional Mobility Authority. The summary is discussed above.
- On March 13, the House Environmental Regulation Committee met for an organizational hearing on agencies and issues under the committee's jurisdiction. They heard testimonies from many agencies, including TCEQ. TCEQ's Executive Director, Kelly Keel, provided an overview of the agency and its responsibilities. Representatives praised TCEQ's work and expressed interest in tracking their ongoing workload.

TEXAS SENATE

- On March 12, the Senate Transportation Committee met to consider and adopt the Committee Rules, conduct any other organizational business deemed necessary by the Chair, and consider a couple of bills. The summary is discussed above.
- On March 12, the Senate Natural Resources Committee met to consider a couple of bills, including SB 763 (Relating to the renewal and review of standard permits for certain concrete plants). A committee substitute for this bill was adopted. The substitute removes the review requirement for permits with enhanced controls to address concerns that led to the bill's veto last session. During discussion, Sen. Birdwell questioned whether background air pollutant concentrations are currently considered in protectiveness reviews and whether federal law requires this. TCEQ clarified that background concentrations are included only if emissions exceed a significant impact level. Concerns were raised about ensuring the bill's language does not create regulatory obstacles that delay permit approvals. The bill remains pending in committee.
- On March 12, the Senate Finance Committee met to consider SB 1, General Appropriations Bill. The Legislative Budget Board (LBB) presented the multiple work group committee recommendations for all articles of the bill, including Articles VI (Natural Resources) and VII (Business and Economic Development). The committee adopted the work group recommendations for Articles VI and VII.