



## Transportation Updates and Regulatory News (TURN)

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### DOT Launches Regional Infrastructure Acceleration Program

In December, 2020, the Department of Transportation (DOT) [launched a new demonstration program](#) to expedite delivery of transportation infrastructure projects through innovative finance and delivery methods. DOT's Build America Bureau issued a notice of funding opportunity to designate and fund Regional Infrastructure Accelerators (Accelerators) to serve defined geographic areas. The demo program also aims to show the effectiveness of these Accelerators in expediting the delivery of eligible projects through Federal credit assistance programs, including the Transportation Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act and other innovative financing methods. A total of \$5 million is available for the program.

### FMCSA Formulates New Rule on Rear Impact Guard Inspection

In December, 2020, the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) [issued a notice of proposed rulemaking](#) (NPRM) to amend the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Regulations. The amendment would include rear impact guards on the list of items that must be examined in the required annual inspection for commercial motor vehicles (CMV). FMCSA also proposes amending the labeling requirements for rear impact guards and excluding road-construction-controlled horizontal discharge trailers from the rear impact guard requirements. These changes would incorporate feedback from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration to correspond with Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards. The NPRM was in response to rulemaking petitions and recommendation from the Government Accountability Office. Comments on the NPRM can be viewed [here](#).



## FMCSA Amends Rules on Vision Standards

On January 12, FMCSA [issued a notice of proposed rulemaking](#) to amend its regulations to relax the vision test standard for operating a CMV in interstate commerce. The new standard would allow individuals who cannot meet either the current distant visual acuity or field of vision standard, or both, in one eye, to be physically qualified to operate a CMV in interstate commerce. Currently, such individuals are prohibited from driving CMVs in interstate commerce, unless they obtain an exemption from FMCSA. If adopted, an alternative vision standard would replace the current vision exemption program as a basis for qualifying these individuals. Comments can be viewed [here](#).

## ASCE Releases New Infrastructure Report

On January 12, the American Society of Civil Engineers [released a new report](#), *Failure to Act: Economic Impacts of Status Quo Investment Across Infrastructure System*, to explore the economic challenges associated with inadequate investments in infrastructure. The study compares current and projected needs for infrastructure investment against the current funding trends in surface transportation (highways, bridges), seaports, and inland waterways. The analysis finds current funding levels will cover only 57 percent of the aggregate infrastructure system needs by 2039. By 2039, inland waterways and marine ports are projected to have a funding deficit of \$49 billion, and the projected funding gap for surface transportation is \$2.5 trillion.

## Incentive Program of the Port of LA To Move Trucks More Efficiently

On January 19, the Port of Los Angeles (LA) launched its [Truck Turn-Time and Dual-Transaction](#) program to move trucks in and out of terminals more quickly. Under the program, terminal operators can earn financial rewards two different ways: either by reducing drop-off and pick-up time for trucks or by letting trucks handle both drop-offs and pick-ups in the same trip. Terminals that can reduce truck turn times 5-20 percent will receive \$.50-\$2.75 per loaded or empty container. The size of the reward will depend on the terminal's turn times—rewards grow as turn times shorten. Additionally, terminal operators can earn \$.40-\$1.40 per container when at least half of all trucks dropping off a container leave with another in the same trip. The dual-transaction incentives increase as the share of dual transactions grow. Effective February 1, the incentive program is estimated to cost the Port of LA \$7.5 million in its first year.

## ATRI Releases Annual Report on Truck Bottlenecks

On February 24, the American Transportation Research Institute (ATRI) released its annual [Top 100 Truck Bottlenecks Report](#). Using global positioning service (GPS) data from more than 1 million freight trucks, the analysis measured levels of truck-involved congestion at over 300 locations on the national highway system. Twenty-nine States were found to have at least one bottleneck. For the third consecutive year, New Jersey was found to have the worst bottleneck. In 2020, the average peak-hour truck speed at bottlenecks was 43 miles per hour. This was 34 percent higher than in 2019 because of reduced traffic resulting from COVID-19 stay-at-home orders. Reduced traffic both sped up many construction projects and limited slowdowns in construction zones. In March 2020, average truck speeds at some of the worst locations improved by 100 percent or more from a year earlier. In February 2020, truck activity increased because of panic buying, then immediately decreased in March because of business shutdowns. Normal levels of activity resumed in April and May.



### **ASCE Releases 2021 Infrastructure Report Card**

On March 3, the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) recently released its quadrennial analysis, its [2021 Report Card for America's Infrastructure](#). Up from a D-plus 4 years ago, the U.S. infrastructure system received a general a grade of C-minus this year. The analysis found 42 percent of 617,000 U.S. bridges were more than 50 years old, and researchers rated more than 46,000 of them as structurally deficient. Likewise, every year, more bridges slip from good to fair condition. Despite modest improvements in some infrastructure categories—including railroads, inland waterways, and ports—the Nation's infrastructure funding gap continues to grow. The report projects a shortfall of \$2.59 trillion over the next 10 years, at an estimated loss of \$10 trillion in economic growth and a loss of over 3 million jobs by 2039. The report asserts major Federal investment is required to mitigate the effects of a changing climate and other sources of deterioration.

### **FHWA Awards 18.7 Million in Grants for Alternatives to Surface Transportation Funding**

On March 16, the U.S. Department of Transportation's (DOT) Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) awarded \$18.7 million in Surface Transportation System Funding Alternatives (STSFA) grants to eight projects to explore new user-based funding methods for highways and bridges. The program helps States explore innovative new ways to finance the Highway Trust Fund in the long term. Led by six State DOTs and two transportation coalitions, the STSFA pilot projects allow States to learn about alternative new user fee structures. The new structures can complement traditional funding sources to build and improve the Nation's highway and bridge infrastructure. The full list of grant recipients can be viewed [here](#).

### **ATRI Releases New Report on Costs of Tax on Vehicle Miles Traveled**

On March 17, the American Transportation Research Institute (ATRI) released [A Practical Analysis of a National VMT Tax System](#), a report outlining the costs of deploying and operating a national vehicle miles traveled (VMT) tax. National infrastructure projects are currently funded by the Highway Trust Fund, which collects money through a Federal fuel tax. The study found replacing the Federal fuel tax with a VMT tax could increase collection costs to more than \$20 billion annually—300 times higher than collection costs for the current Federal fuel tax. The large increase in costs is due to the complications associated with collecting, from 200 or so fuel terminal operators, money that must be tracked to every registered motor vehicle in the United States.

### **New Trucker Panel To Advise ATA**

In March, the American Trucking Association (ATA) [recently established a new advisory panel of truckers](#) to the ATA federation to support relationships between the trucking industry and law enforcement organizations nationwide. The panel consists of ATA members with prior experience in Federal, state and local law enforcement. The panel also includes current and retired law enforcement officials who have contributed positively to the partnership between both groups. Convening bimonthly, the new 22-member Law Enforcement Advisory Board identifies areas of opportunity and provides recommendations on priority issues. During its inaugural meeting (held virtually in March), the board identified primary issues it would focus on in the coming weeks and months.



**United States Department of Agriculture**

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