



Transportation/Aviation Update

November 18, 2022

NEXT WEEK

Next week, the House and Senate will be on their Thanksgiving recess, returning the week of November 28. The current Continuing Resolution runs through December 16.

LAST WEEK

House Leadership Elections

House Republicans held their leadership elections for the 118th Congress. These are the top three House Republicans next year:

- Rep. Kevin McCarthy (R-CA), nominated by Republicans to be the next Speaker of the House. He will need to secure 218 votes from the entire House in January to be elected Speaker.
- Rep. Steve Scalise (R-LA), will be Majority Leader
- Rep. Tom Emmer (R-MN) will be Majority Whip

Earmark Update. House Republicans considered a number of rule changes for the next Congress. One proposal is to ban earmarks next year. That proposed rule change was set aside for further debate among the Republican Members and will be voted on later this year.

House Democrats have announced they will vote on their leaders on November 30. Current House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) and Majority leader Steny Hoyer (D-MD) have said they will step down from their leadership positions in the next Congress but will remain in Congress. Rep. Jim Clyburn (D-SC) has said he will seek to stay in some leadership position. Three Members have expressed a desire to be selected for the Democratic leadership next year:

- Rep. Hakeem Jeffries (D-NY) for Minority Leader
- Rep. Kathrine Clark (D-MA) for Minority Whip
- Rep. Pete Aguilar (D-CA) for a position that is to be determined

Senate Leadership Elections

Senate Democrats have not held their elections, but their leadership is expected to stay somewhat the same:

- Senator Chuck Schumer (D-NY), Majority Leader
- Senator Dick Durbin (D-IL), Majority Whip
- Senator Patty Murray (D-WA) will vacate Assistant Majority Leader position. However, Senator Schumer has indicated he will nominate her to be President Pro Tempore, making her third in line to succeed the President, after the Vice President and Speaker of the House.

Senate Republicans held their elections this week with the following results:

- Senator Mitch McConnell (R-KY), Minority Leader
- Senator John Thune (R-SD), Minority Whip
- Senator John Barrasso (R-WY) Conference Chair
- Senator Joni Ernst (R-IA) Policy Chair
- Senator Shelley Moore Capito (R-WV) Conference Vice Chair

House

Hearing: On November 17, the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee held a hearing entitled “Accessible Air Travel: Addressing Challenges for Passengers with Disabilities.” The Committee focused on improving the travel experience for passengers with disabilities including check in, security, flights, and baggage claim. Witnesses included representatives from the Government Accountability Office, Paralyzed Veterans of America, Airports Council International, North America, Team USA, and Airlines for America. Among the issues that were raised include airlines’ mishandling of wheelchairs and seat size. Information on the hearing is [here](#).

Senate

Markup: the National Aviation Preparedness Plan Act of 2022. On November 16, the Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee approve on a voice vote H.R. [884](#), the National Aviation Preparedness Plan Act. The bill, which earlier passed the House on a 203-133 vote, would require DOT to develop a national aviation preparedness plan for communicable disease outbreaks within two years.

Hearing: Implementing the IJA – Local Jurisdictions. On November 15, the Environment and Public Works Committee held a hearing to take testimony from several cities and counties on their efforts to use the funds provided through the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA). Witnesses highlighted how the IIJA has provided funds for highway, bike/pedestrian, and bridge improvements. However, witnesses from small, rural communities discussed how their counties

do not have any engineering staff, making it hard for them to identify grant opportunities and navigate the application process. Information on the hearing is [here](#).

Department of Transportation

DOT: Airline Ticket Refunds. DOT announced on November 17 that it was extending through December 16, 2022, the period for interested persons to submit comments to its proposed rule on Airline Ticket Refunds and Consumer Protections. The Federal Register Notice is [here](#).

- Earlier this week, DOT announced that as a result of its enforcement actions against six airlines, more than \$600 million was being refunded to passengers. The DOT release is [here](#).

FTA: Transit-Oriented Development Grants Awarded. On November 17, FTA announced the award of 19 awards totaling \$13.1 million from FTA's [Pilot Program for Transit-Oriented Development \(TOD\) Planning](#), which is intended to support local strategies to increase transit access and encourage ridership through mixed-use and mixed-income development near public transportation projects. The list of projects is [here](#).

FRA: Northeast Corridor Inventory. On November 16, FRA published the "Northeast Corridor Project Inventory, Laying Out Priorities for Intercity Passenger Rail Development on the NEC." The Project Inventory creates a project pipeline to assist Amtrak, States, and the public with long-term planning that is intended to improve service and guide up to \$24 billion in funding that FRA is investing in NEC intercity passenger rail service through the Federal-State Partnership for Intercity Passenger Rail Program. The FRA Inventory is [here](#).

DOT: Justice40. This week, DOT held a webinar on the implementation of its Justice40 program, highlighting the range of programs that are included. The webinar, slides and Q&A session can be found [here](#).

Government Accountability Office

Report: FRA Communications. On November 16, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) issued a report entitled "Better Communication of Safety Information Could Improve the Close Call System." The Confidential Close Call Reporting System (C3RS) is a voluntary and confidential system designed to improve railroad safety by collecting reports from railroad employees describing unsafe situations that have the potential for more serious consequences. While not all railroads participate, those that do told GAO that the system increased safety information and improved safety culture. GAO found that FRA did not effectively communicating C3RS safety trends or success stories to the wider railroad industry, non-participating stakeholders may be unaware of important and relevant safety information. The report is [here](#).

###