



**International Right of Way Association Weekly Update**

**Monday, February 27, 2017**

Trump Administration

- President Trump will address a joint session of Congress on Tuesday night, February 28<sup>th</sup>. The White House has indicated that infrastructure will be a component of the speech (<http://thehill.com/policy/transportation/320924-president-trump-will-map-out-infrastructure-ideas-in-budget-joint>).
- News broke on Thursday, however, indicating that infrastructure may not ultimately be a Republican priority for 2017 and that other more pressing priorities could bump consideration of an infrastructure package back to 2018 (<https://www.axios.com/the-backup-plan-on-trumps-infrastructure-package-2280024749.html>).
- President Trump is expected to direct his Administration to begin preparing the fiscal year 2018 budget proposal in accordance with certain general parameters on Monday the 27<sup>th</sup> (<https://www.bloomberg.com/politics/articles/2017-02-27/proposed-trump-budget-said-to-boost-defense-spending-cut-epa>). Given the fact that the President's nominee to run the Office of Management and Budget has not yet been confirmed, the first portion of the fiscal year 2018 budget proposal is now scheduled to be transmitted to Congress in mid-March (<https://www.bna.com/topline-budget-information-n57982084160/>).

Congress

- The Senate reconvenes this week and is slated to vote on Rep. Ryan Zinke's appointment to be Interior Secretary (<http://www.kpax.com/story/34605293/zinke-confirmation-as-interior-secretary-likely-on-tuesday>).
- The Senate Commerce Committee will hold a hearing on Wednesday entitled "Connecting America: Improving Access to Infrastructure for Communities Across the Country," hearing testimony from witnesses from South Dakota, Miami Beach, the Utah Department of Transportation, and NTCA—The Rural Broadband Association (<http://www.commerce.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/2017/3/connecting-america-improving-access-to-infrastructure-for-communities-across-the-country>).

### Analysis

- President Trump's address to Congress on Tuesday night could provide the first public glimpse of the details of his infrastructure plan, both in terms of the policies he will push and the timing and manner of advancing those priorities. It is worth noting, however, that presidential addresses to Congress have not historically been heavy on details, instead allowing the President to provide a broader defense of and argument for high-level policy goals.
- With the current scarcity of specific infrastructure policy details from the Administration or Congress, the address on Tuesday would provide a perfect opportunity for President Trump to articulate details of his plan, to be fleshed out more fully in the fiscal year 2018 budget proposal, expected in mid-March. It is unlikely that the Administration and congressional Republicans will agree on all aspects of infrastructure policy, but for now, congressional Republicans have deferred to the Administration to make the first move, given the President's campaign promise. If President Trump does not advance a cohesive infrastructure policy in the budget proposal, however, key Members of Congress may begin pushing their own ideas more firmly than they have to date.