



## International Right of Way Association Weekly Update

Monday, March 13, 2017

### Trump Administration

- Known as a “skinny” or “pamphlet” budget, President Trump is expected to transmit an abbreviated version of his fiscal year 2018 budget proposal to Congress this week. The budget outline he released at the end of February was met with criticism from lawmakers on both sides of the aisle (<http://www.businessinsider.com/trumps-skinny-budget-might-be-dead-on-arrival-2017-3>).
- Treasury Secretary Mnuchin formally notified Congress that the U.S. government began taking extraordinary measures to avoid defaulting on its obligations. While Sec. Mnuchin requested that Congress raise the debt limit as early as possible, budget experts estimate that the federal government could use extraordinary measures to avoid a default until late summer or early fall (<https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/wonk/wp/2017/03/09/treasury-calls-on-congress-to-raise-debt-limit-begins-steps-to-delay-default/>).

### Congress

- House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee Chairman reiterated what many have been thinking and saying, that the infrastructure package that will ultimately move through Congress will not include \$1 trillion in federal direct spending and will rely, to a significant degree, on non-federal public and private funds to reach the \$1 trillion benchmark (<http://www.bondbuyer.com/news/washington-infrastructure/shuster-says-infrastructure-plan-wont-be-funded-by-1t-check-from-congress-1126650-1.html>).
- The House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee will hold a hearing on Wednesday entitled “FAST Act Implementation: State and Local Perspectives,” hearing from representatives of the American Association of State Highway Transportation Officials (AASHTO), the American Public Transportation Association (APTA), and the National League of Cities (NLC) (<http://transportation.house.gov/calendar/eventsingle.aspx?EventID=401203>).

### Analysis

- On Capitol Hill this week, all of the attention was on Republican introduction of a replacement to the Affordable Care Act (ACA), commonly known as Obamacare

[https://www.nytimes.com/2017/03/11/us/politics/republican-health-law-repeal-strategy.html?\\_r=0](https://www.nytimes.com/2017/03/11/us/politics/republican-health-law-repeal-strategy.html?_r=0)). The Republican strategy is to use the reconciliation congressional budget procedure to repeal the ACA, allow the Administration to use its regulatory authority to try to stabilize health insurance markets, and then take further legislative action.

- Congressional strategy on the ACA is relevant to infrastructure policy insofar as it provides insight into the attenuated timing that Congress will spend on health care alone. As mentioned last week, the items Congress will address before turning to tax reform and infrastructure are not insignificant: fiscal year 2017 appropriations, health care, the fiscal year 2018 budget, fiscal year 2018 appropriations, and the debt limit, not to mention Judge Gorsuch's Supreme Court nomination and numerous other political nominations.
- President Trump's skinny budget will propose funding levels for all federal agencies, including federal transportation programs. Historically, prior Administrations have used the budget proposal process to advance and generate support for their policy agendas. With the White House still in information-gathering mode <http://thehill.com/policy/transportation/322912-tesla-ceo-joining-trump-for-infrastructure-meeting-report>), it will be interesting to see what infrastructure policy proposals the skinny budget contains.
- The AASHTO Washington Briefing provided a venue for the nation's transportation leaders to congregate and discuss infrastructure issues and opportunities. Nossaman participated in the event, and much of the analysis herein is based on such conversations.