

Reauthorization 201

Influencing the process

PolicyLink



**Transportation
for America**

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I. Introduction

This follow-up guide to [Reauthorization 101: Understanding the Process](#) is intended to explain and demystify how you or your organization can be most effective at advocating for the transportation funding priorities that are most important to you or your communities. Creating change and impact at the federal level for any area is no easy task, but influence is possible when you have the right tools, information, and resources. We hope this guide can be used to better understand what power you have as an individual advocate, organization, or campaign.

HOW REAUTHORIZATION CAN SHAPE COMMUNITIES

Through the federal surface transportation reauthorization process, the federal government sets policy and provides funding for the nation's highway, transit, safety, and rail programs for multiple years at a time, usually covering five to six years, but not always. [The legislation dictates](#), among other things: (1) how much money goes to states, localities, and transit agencies, (2) how much will be directed to each mode of transportation, and (3) how much funding will be distributed to states and transit agencies automatically

each year vs. being reserved for distribution through a competitive application process. With more than \$100 billion in federal funds available for transportation every year (under current law), these decisions about who receives funding and for what purpose have a significant impact on which projects ultimately get built and which are left to languish, which communities benefit, and which communities are burdened.

Transportation is a crucial link to ensuring opportunity for all—connecting us to jobs, schools, housing, health care, and grocery stores. But millions of people live in communities where quality transportation options are unaffordable, unreliable, or nonexistent. We believe that looking at the population below 200 percent of poverty can provide a useful approach for understanding economic insecurity in the United States, and [there are currently over 100 million people living below this threshold in the U.S.](#)—one in three people. Federal transportation policy choices—what we build, where we put it, who builds it, how we operate it, what energy powers it—have an enormous impact on our economy, our climate, and our health. We must invest in a manner that builds a nation where all people can participate and prosper, and [100 million people are no longer burdened by economic and transportation insecurities.](#)

WHO WRITES THE REAUTHORIZATION BILL?

House and Senate Committees

Committees in the House or Senate oversee specific policy areas, review legislation, and conduct oversight of agencies that implement programs and rules. Each committee (or subcommittee) has authority over certain topics. Committees write and pass legislation (out of the committee), which then moves to a vote in the House or Senate in order to get passed.

House and Senate committees have two basic responsibilities:

1. Developing legislation
2. Conducting oversight related to their areas of jurisdiction

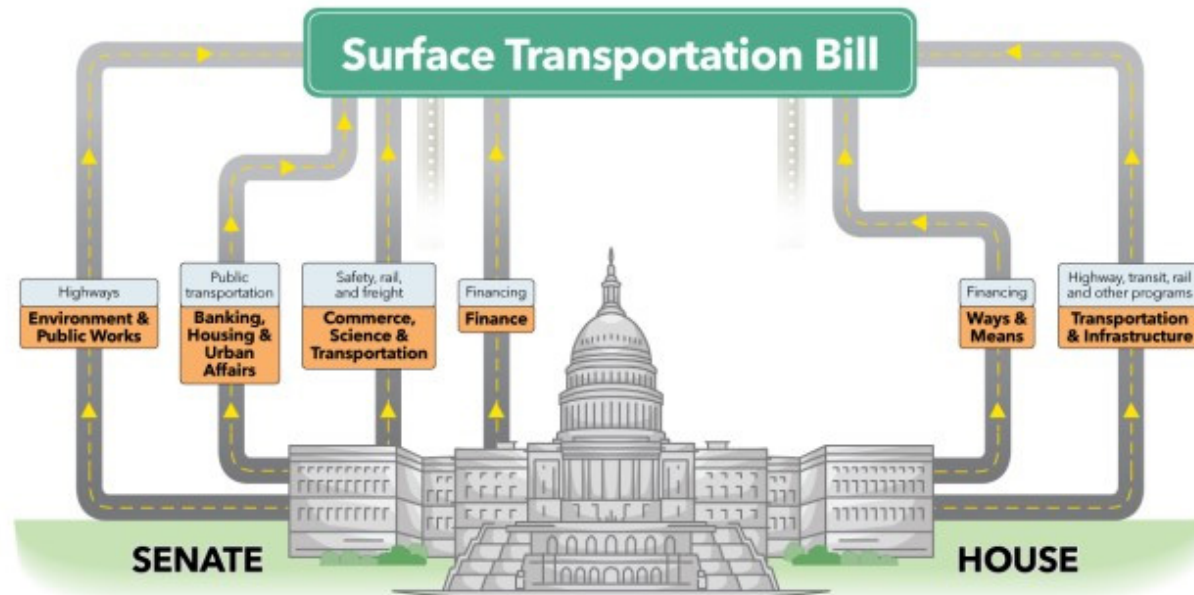
The **committee chair** for each of the committees establishes the legislative priorities as well as the schedule for the committee. Some committees meet weekly, or even multiple times a week, while others meet less frequently, depending upon factors such as the breadth of their jurisdiction, whether there are expiring programs that must be reauthorized, and how active the committee's chair desires to be.

Committee leaders and membership are established at the beginning of each new Congress, and generally remain constant for the full duration of that Congress, i.e. two years. Occasionally, a member of Congress will resign or pass away, and that member's replacement may or may not be appointed to the same committee(s). While this can lead to a little shuffling of committee members, it is relatively rare.

Committee leaders have the most influence over the specific contents of the reauthorization bill. They will determine how much funding to allocate to each program, what new programs or policies to include, and a host of other changes and additions to existing law. Senators and Representatives who are on the committee will typically be given the opportunity to influence the bill while it is in the early stages of development, although some committees are more proactive in this regard than others. Which committees are proactive about involving their members can change from Congress to Congress as committee leadership changes. If your senator or representative is on a committee, you can ask whether they have been approached by the committee leadership about their priorities for the bill. Even if

Committees Responsible for Surface Transportation Reauthorization

Several panels will play a role in a long-term reauthorization.



Note: Additional committees – including House Energy and Commerce and Science, Space and Technology – may also be involved in the final bill.

Sources: Bloomberg Government reporting, Congressional Research Service

Bloomberg Government

they have not been asked, committee members can approach committee leadership to raise issues they want addressed.

This structure gives a great deal of control to committee leadership and, to a lesser extent, to committee members. However, even a member who is not on a relevant committee can influence the bill by approaching committee leadership while the committee's bill is in development. (As noted below, it is much harder to change the bill after it's been passed by the committee). To be successful, a non-committee member will have to be persistent in making their case to committee leadership, but an actively engaged, hard-working non-committee member can actually have more influence over a bill than a disengaged committee member.

Assuming a standard legislative process is followed, the reauthorization bill will be developed in separate sections in the various committees with jurisdiction over [transportation](#). Most of the work of drafting the bills will be done by the committee's chair (in the 119th Congress, all chairs are Republicans) and "ranking member" - the member of the minority party who has been appointed

to lead the minority members of the committee (Democrats, in the 119th Congress). For larger committees, like House Transportation & Infrastructure, the subcommittees will have a bigger role.

Subcommittees

Because committees have broad agendas and cover many topics, they are often split into subcommittees. Each subcommittee is responsible for overseeing a portion of the issues covered under the jurisdiction of that committee. However, the actual influence of subcommittees varies. While subcommittees exist in all of the committees with jurisdiction over sections of the reauthorization bill, some committees prefer to do their legislative work at the full committee level, rather than delegating it to the subcommittee. This is more common in the Senate, where committee sizes are smaller and more manageable.

In reality, most of the components of the reauthorization bill will be developed by the staff, either of the full committee or the subcommittee. Committee staff will primarily be looking for proposals that (1) advance their boss' priorities (including aligning with the policy agenda of the White House, if they are of the same party), (2)

appeal to other members of the committee, and/or (3) address issues raised by their constituents. The bill will typically be drafted by the chair's staff with input from the ranking member's staff, although occasionally the chair's staff develops the bill without such input.¹

II. When is the best time to influence reauthorization?

The best time to influence reauthorization is before the various components of the bill are written in the Congressional committees with jurisdiction. Items that are included in the committees' draft bills have the best chance of making it through the legislative process; it can be difficult to add or change them after the committee work is done.

Committee staff started meeting with stakeholders early in 2025, as it is typical for these meetings to begin more than a year before the reauthorization is due. They will likely spend the rest of the year having discussions, holding hearings, and writing the various components

¹ Sometimes the chair and ranking member of the full committee along with the lead subcommittee agree to only advance proposals or support amendments that they all agree to. This is referred to as a "Big 4" agreement.

of the bill that will ultimately make up the complete reauthorization act. Advocacy should begin in the spring of 2025, but should not stop there. A continuous cadence of meetings, phone calls, emails, in-district events, and other outreach will be needed to develop the necessary relationships with your Congressional delegation and the staff who support the drafting of their bills in committees of jurisdiction, and to keep your issues front and center.

III. Advocacy vs. lobbying

You do not need to be a professional lobbyist to advocate in Congress; you just need to be an authentic voice for your community, with a clear and compelling story to tell and a well-thought-out approach to partnering with members and their staff to meaningfully improve policy. Building a relationship with Congressional members and staff is not fundamentally different from building relationships with other professionals you work with. A strong relationship will be built on common interests, trust, and respect, and a successful relationship will include demonstrating that you and/or your organization is able to add value to policymaking.

EFFECTIVE ADVOCACY



However, it is important to understand what advocacy is and what lobbying is. Lobbying occurs when advocacy is intended to influence specific legislation. Nonprofits are allowed to lobby, [subject to certain limits](#). As the [Florida Nonprofit Alliance](#) said: “Nonprofits can, and often should, lobby at all levels of government.”

For example, it is advocacy to point out that a city’s most dangerous roads don’t have adequate sidewalks or crossings. It is also advocacy to explain that your state transportation department said the federal rules do not allow them to slow traffic on a road. But it is lobbying to ask that the reauthorization bill require all roads that are open to pedestrians have adequate sidewalks and crossings.

All communications—meetings, phone, email, etc.—count as lobbying if they are seeking to influence specific legislation (as do the hours spent preparing for those communications).

However, there are exceptions for certain types of communications, including:

- Sharing a published report, even if the report expresses a particular viewpoint;
- Participating in a discussion of a general social or economic issue, such as the challenges of mobility in rural America; and
- Responding to a committee’s written request for your opinion or testimony.

501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations (other than private foundations) are allowed to engage in some federal lobbying, subject to certain limits. The limits are determined by one of two tests:

- If an organization elects to be governed by Section 501(h) of the tax code, definitions and limits are clearly spelled out in IRS guidance;
- If the organization does not make that election, then lobbying activities must be only an “insubstantial part” of the organization’s activities, generally around 20 percent of the organization’s time.

This section does not provide a comprehensive explanation of all lobbying rules. You may want to seek additional guidance specific to your organization on the applicable lobbying limits and the types of activities that count as lobbying.²

² For further information: The Alliance for Justice’s Bolder Advocacy project has prepared several guides to nonprofit lobbying, including [Being a Player: A Guide to the IRS Lobbying Regulations for Advocacy Charities](#) and [IRS Lobbying Flowchart](#). Alliance for Justice offers numerous other resources on nonprofit lobbying, including technical assistance and training opportunities, [on its website](#).

IDENTIFY THE PROBLEM AND ACTION ITEMS

The first thing that must be done before advocating is accurately identifying the transportation problems in communities, the policy solutions that should be used to address those problems, and specifically, how they can be addressed through reauthorization legislation. As advocates, we are all aware that our transportation system is deeply flawed and neglected, causing transportation barriers and burdens experienced by our more marginalized community members, and is also foundational to creating thriving communities of opportunity. Specifically identifying the problem is the first step so you can concisely bring the issue to your representative.

Once your transportation issue is identified, the next step is to develop ideas to help your representative solve the problem. You should aim to be as precise in your policy suggestions as possible, and consider how they relate to other priorities that may be included in the bill. You should also put together information about how this affects the district of the member of Congress you plan to speak with. It can be helpful to show pictures or

provide statistics about what is or is not working and how your proposed change would address that.

Keep in mind that committee staffers are often flooded with requests and are constantly seeking legal and politically feasible ways to incorporate those requests and suggestions into an actively evolving bill. Precision in both your requests and suggestions for bill language can act as not only a strategic approach for moving your priorities forward, but also a gift to the committee staff (less work for them!).

The third step is to develop your “ask.” This may be asking committee staff to include your proposal in their draft bill, asking your member of Congress to introduce your proposal as a stand-alone bill, or asking your member to co-sponsor a bill that has already been introduced. Other forms of action include asking your member of Congress to speak directly to the committee chair or ranking member on behalf of your proposal or otherwise act as a champion (see next section for definition of “champion”).

BUILD THE RIGHT RELATIONSHIPS

Next, you should identify the members of your Congressional delegation. This will include the two senators representing your state, and whatever representatives’ districts correspond with your community. If you are representing a single neighborhood or small city, this may be just one representative. If you are representing a larger metropolitan area, you may have multiple representatives.

You can find a list of Senators on this website:
<https://www.senate.gov/senators/index.htm>

You can find your Representative(s) by visiting this website and entering your ZIP Code(s):
<https://www.house.gov/representatives/find-your-representative>

Then, begin building a relationship with them (ways to do this are described in more detail below). The goal of this initial work is to identify a member or members of your delegation who will be a champion for your issues. A champion is a member who will work with you

to develop a compelling case and who will make that case to colleagues in meetings, at hearings, or during floor debate, and who will continue pressing your issues throughout the reauthorization process. One of the biggest challenges in advocacy is finding a member who will be a strong champion of your issue throughout the whole process, and not compromise or back down when it is challenged. Sometimes, members' offices may say they support your issue but won't actually do what it takes to advance it, e.g. they might make one call to the committee and then drop it. The best way to avoid this is to build your relationship with your Congressional delegation and hold them to account by frequently checking in to see what progress they are making on your request.

Getting your members' attention

Even with strong advocacy, some members are very hard to influence. You may also find that your delegation includes members who are not ideologically aligned with your request. If this is the case, you can try a few different strategies. For example, you may be able to find alternative messengers, such as local business or faith leaders, who could help motivate a reluctant

member to act. You could partner with advocates in nearby Congressional districts or even other states who might have a more receptive member. You can also seek opportunities to partner with advocates from other districts and states to make the case directly to committee leadership. While committee staff may not have time to meet with every individual group that seeks a meeting, they will likely be more receptive to requests from coalitions representing multiple organizations from around the country.

HOW TO BUILD RELATIONSHIPS WITH MEMBERS OF CONGRESS

There are many ways to build relationships with members of Congress. Travel to Washington, DC is not required, though it can be helpful when used strategically. Below are a number of activities that can help develop these relationships.

Do your research

Before beginning engagement with Congressional offices, it can be helpful to do some research into the

member's policy positions and any specific actions they have already taken on transportation. This will allow you to tailor your message to appeal to the member's existing priorities or counter the member's misconceptions. You can start with the member's official website (see the [Congressional Record Index](#) and the [Senate Congressional Records Index](#) for easy access) and social media. Members also often publish press releases about specific issues and bills on their official websites. These can be useful summaries of their positions on these issues. If the member is on a relevant committee, you can access recordings of prior hearings on the committee website to see what questions your member asked. You can also search [congress.gov](https://www.congress.gov) to see what bills your member has introduced or co-sponsored.

Utilize meetings

Advocates can seek to meet with members of Congress or their staff. There is nothing like a personal meeting with constituents to highlight an issue for a member. However, scheduling meetings with members can be difficult, even for constituents. While waiting for time to open up on a member's calendar, it is still very worthwhile to meet with staff.

Members have two sets of staff: those who work locally in the home state or district offices, and those who work in DC. For the most part, the local staff are responsible for constituent services (such as helping constituents resolve issues with federal agencies) and representing the member at local events. Most policy decisions will be made in the DC office. Local staff can and do have influence over those decisions by sharing what they hear at local events and introducing local groups to the DC office.

Staff-level meetings will be much easier to arrange, and they are important because the staff will manage the day-to-day priorities for their boss within the issue areas they manage. These meetings can be either in-person or virtual. Virtual meetings have become common, which is helpful as not everyone can get to DC regularly. However, in-person meetings are generally more effective. You will get more of their focus and a better sense of how they are responding to your concerns and requests. During your initial meeting, you should aim not only to communicate your issues (see communications tips below), but also to get a sense of where the staffers' and the member's interests lie, how knowledgeable they

are about the issues, how willing they might be to help, and how you might position yourself as a resource to them.

It's important not to assume that a single meeting will be sufficient in advocating for your priorities. You should plan to follow up and be in regular contact with staffers and offices. This does not necessarily mean frequent meetings; once a quarter or even twice a year is likely sufficient, if there is regular contact in between through the activities below.

Keep in mind that transportation isn't an issue that comes up in Congress often because it is only reauthorized every 5-6 years, while legislative staff tend to stay in one job for about two years. So you might need to provide [Reauthorization 101](#)-level information to them, especially if you are talking to a staff person for a member of Congress who is not on one of the transportation committees. You might also meet with a legislative correspondent, who is in charge of managing responses to letters from constituents, as opposed to a legislative assistant, who will manage their boss's work on legislation. If so, do what you can to use that meeting

to connect with the legislative assistant too, such as getting their contact information for follow-up along with the legislative correspondents.

Utilize in-district events

Another way to engage with your members is to invite them to events when they are in their home district or state, or attend events that the members themselves host. The House and Senate both have [active calendars](#) that show when members of Congress are back in their home districts. These opportunities allow more advocates to share stories and inform representatives of the importance of investing in transportation.

For example, town halls are public events where community members are invited to speak on issues with their senators and representatives. These meetings allow elected representatives to hear directly from their constituents and to explain their positions on the issues. Town halls are typically held after big events, a significant piece of legislation passes, there is important news/impacts to the community, or during a recess. See the appendix for the [National Campaign for Transit Justice's Transit Town Hall Tool Kit](#).

You can also invite your member to an event that you arrange, such as a community forum with transit riders or a tour of a proposed project site or a dangerous intersection. Transit advocates can arrange “ride-alongs” with elected officials, in which they invite the official to join them on a bus, train, or bike ride where they can experience the transportation issues first-hand.

Utilize letters/phone calls

[Congressional offices on their official websites](#) have “contact” pages to input information and requests. Letters can also be mailed to the offices or emailed directly to staff, and phone calls can be directed to the appropriate member’s office by calling the [Senate or House switchboard](#) (United States Capitol switchboard: (202) 224-3121). Letters can be sent at any time, and may be sent by organizations or individuals. The impact of these messages can be amplified with coordinated efforts across organizations. When offices get multiple messages about a specific issue, they are more likely to take action on that issue. You have likely also seen campaign efforts on social media to call your local representative to act or vote a certain way.

ENGAGING IN CONGRESSIONAL HEARINGS

Hearings are typically announced on the committees’ websites at least a week ahead of time. These hearings are open to the public to attend and view; however, only invited witnesses can testify. Hearings are live-streamed on committee websites, and a recording or transcript is usually available afterward for those who cannot watch live. Copies of witnesses’ written testimony are also posted on committee websites.

You can share suggested questions with members of the committee or share them with the invited witnesses list, and you can also ask that the member include a letter or statement that you prepared for the record. Be sure to share questions or a statement a few days ahead of time. Finally, you can let the committee staff or members of the committee know that you are available and willing to testify on certain issues, but know that you would have to cover your own expenses to participate in person.

All of this is easier to accomplish if you have already established a relationship with the member’s office, so start that outreach now.

CONGRESSIONAL OUTREACH: CONSISTENCY IS KEY

Once you have started to develop a relationship with your members and their staff, it is imperative to keep them engaged with your issues. In addition to the activities above, you can also send occasional emails or make calls to your main point of contact in the office with relevant articles, reports, or other updates.

Best communications practices

Before contacting Congressional offices, it is important to understand that many staffers are not going to be experts in surface transportation. There is a very high turnover rate on Capitol Hill, and not all staffers are given portfolios where they have a large background or expertise. It is our job as advocates to meet them where they are and help them understand the importance of transportation issues. Congressional staffers need direction and understanding from advocates and constituents to best assist our needs.

Write a letter/email

Congressional offices get thousands of letters, but they also have staff whose job it is to go through those letters,

report to their boss if they are seeing an increase in letters on a particular issue, and formulate a response. There is no need to follow any specific mold, but if you are looking for a place to start, [check the appendix for a template](#).

Sign-on letters

An organizational sign-on letter demonstrates broad support from multiple organizations to showcase the depth of support behind a cause. They are a great tool for coalition building as well. Sign-on letters are usually more detailed than your typical call, email, and letter to your representative. Check out this sign-on letter from Transportation for America that calls on Congress [to fully fund key transportation programs](#) as a general example. [The appendix includes a suggested format for sign-on letters](#).

Calling your Congressional offices

Calling Congressional offices to request they support/oppose a bill is very simple. Typically, your call will be answered by a staff assistant or legislative correspondent who will take down your message, get your contact information, and add this to the letters

for a response. But some offices now will send you to voicemail to leave a message with your position and contact information. While Congressional offices will take all calls, most only log and respond to calls from constituents.

[For a phone call script, see the template in the appendix.](#)

Policy white papers

White papers are reports that inform readers of complex issues in more detail than a fact sheet or one-pager. They are usually written to policy makers to examine a policy issue and consider remedies. The tone should be objective, even when making targeted recommendations, and may range from 5 to 50 pages depending on the depth of the issue.

Similar to the other forms of advocacy strategies, there is no one specific outline that must be followed. A general outline for a white paper could look like:

1. Executive Summary
2. Background on the issue
3. Description of the problem

4. Possible solutions
5. Recommendations
6. References

PolicyLink has many examples of white papers, including [this one for infrastructure standards](#).

Social media

Social media is another powerful tool that is most effective when utilized consistently. Writing posts and publicly calling out to representatives is similar in action to that of calling or writing to their office. Coordinated social media campaigns help get the word out on important awareness weeks, bills to be considered, and tragedies that can be avoided. Establish hashtags such as “WeekWithoutDriving” to demonstrate the importance of your issue and enable others to support your cause. You do not need to be a powerful organization to have your voice heard. Individuals who use their small but mighty platform can have their voices elevated. One example is [the social media users who called on New York Governor Kathy Hochul to restore congestion pricing](#).

Creating “leave behind” documents

After in-person Congressional meetings, you can provide flyers or one-pagers to highlight your issue area or organization. This is not necessary to make your visit the most fruitful, but some offices use them as physical reminders of the issues you discussed. These documents do not have to be formulaic and can simply introduce your organization/cause and highlight certain statistics, what bills you are asking for support/opposition, and general information about your issue area. To learn more about tools that are useful for advocates, visit Transportation for America’s [Community Connectors Portal](#). The portal provides resources and information for advocates to decode the complex information world of federal and state transportation dollars.

Examples of leave behinds include T4America’s [state fact sheets](#) showing the performance of each state in terms of the condition of roads and bridges, roadway safety, and investment in transit as well as the [fact sheets on the organization’s three organizational principles](#).

IV. Final thoughts

There are many ways that you can communicate your priorities with the members of Congress who will determine what the next surface transportation reauthorization funds and supports. None of it has to be slick, nor do you have to travel to do it. But your elected representatives can’t know what you want if you don’t tell them. So tell them.

And if you need a little more help understanding who makes transportation decisions, how those decisions are made, and what transportation agencies mean when they use technical terms, check out Transportation for America’s [Community Connectors Portal: A Tool for Advocates](#).

V. The weeds of the reauthorization process

You haven't gotten enough? Want to know more of the nitty gritty of how reauthorization comes to be? We've got your back! Dive into...

COMMITTEE/SUBCOMMITTEE ORGANIZATION

Committees include leadership, member, and staff positions. Committee leaders and membership are decided by the leaders of each party, and are influenced by a number of factors: 1) who has "earned" the position through good relationships, 2) who is "senior" in the party (e.g., the appropriations and the tax committees are highly coveted, so usually don't include newer / "freshman" members, 3) how much % each party has of the House or Senate, and 4) members' expertise (e.g., lawyers on judicial committees) or expressed interest.

Specific positions include:

Chair—Person from the party in political power. They manage agendas, relationships with members, and usually work with the ranking member of the committee, although the level of collaboration varies.

Vice chair—Sometimes, there is a vice chair appointed to support the ranking member or chair. You will see vice chairs on larger committees or committees with big policy agendas.

Ranking member—Lead member of Congress on the committee in the minority party. This is a powerful position, even though their party is in the minority. Given the small margins in party control, there are times when the majority needs support from minority members to pass legislation. Additionally, while not the norm these days, there are still committees that work in a bipartisan manner.

Committee members—The number of members from each party depends on the total share each party controls of the overall House and Senate. If the

percentage difference between two parties is slim, committees may have just one or two more members from the majority party than the minority party.

Committee staff –Work for either the chair or the ranking member of the committee or subcommittee. They have to support their member, be experts (usually have better policy expertise on specific topics than the member), help negotiate legislation, etc. These differ from Senate and House members’ personal office staff, who support their members of Congress directly on a full range of issues.

HOW IS THE BILL ACTUALLY WRITTEN?

The staff of the committees with jurisdiction over transportation will each write the section of the bill corresponding to their committee’s jurisdiction, using stakeholder meetings, hearings, input from other committee members (and sometimes from members not on the committee), and their bosses’ priorities as a guide. Sometimes, there will also be a reauthorization proposal from the administration, and committee staff

may incorporate all or part of that proposal into their own bills. Typically, these draft sections are developed independently from each other, except in certain situations where jurisdictions overlap (for example, the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee and the Senate Banking Committee may work together on changes to the transportation planning requirements, which apply to both highway and transit projects).

Once these drafts are developed by committee staff, the chair and ranking member of the committee (and sometimes the chair and ranking member of the subcommittee) will negotiate any outstanding issues to see if a bipartisan agreement can be reached. Assuming such an agreement is reached (which is typical in the transportation context), the draft will be shared with the rest of the committee and external stakeholders for review before the committee meets for a “markup,” i.e. a committee meeting where the bill is considered and potentially amended or “marked up.”

Committee members seeking changes to the bill must file amendments with the committee chair before the markup (deadlines differ, but are usually 24-48

hours before the markup). The committee chair and ranking member will meet after the amendments have been filed to see which ones they can agree to. Any that are agreeable will be packaged together into a “manager’s amendment” and accepted into the bill. Other amendments will be considered only if the member who filed the amendment chooses to formally offer it during the markup. This does not always happen; for example, a member may choose not to formally offer a filed amendment if they know it would lose a committee vote. The markup will end with the committee voting to advance the draft bill to the full House or Senate.

Once all the committees of jurisdiction have acted on their bills, the leaders of the House or Senate will determine a time for the bills to be considered by the full chamber. The committee bills will be packaged together for consideration and will undergo another amendment process similar to that which occurred in the committee, but open to all members of the House or Senate.

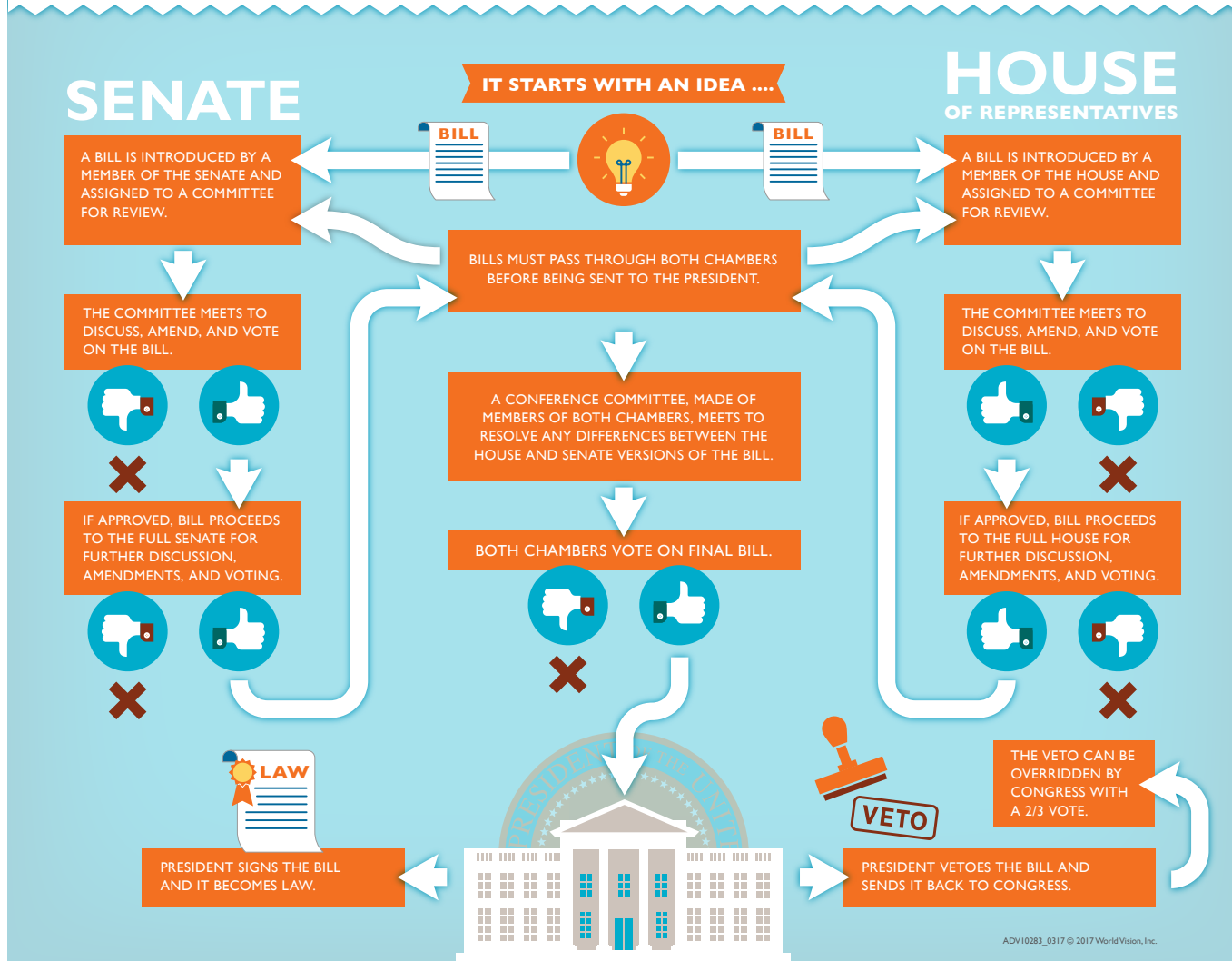
After the House and Senate have passed their versions of the reauthorization bill, a conference committee is appointed with members from each chamber (typically

the leaders or senior members of the committees of jurisdiction), who are responsible for reconciling differences between the House and Senate bills and producing a “conference report” that will be voted on by both chambers. Only provisions that were in the House or Senate version of the bill can be included in the conference report; no new issues can be raised at this time. The conference report cannot be amended but must be passed as-is by both the House and the Senate before it can be sent to the President for signature. (If both chambers pass the same version of the bill, then a conference committee is not needed. For example, after the Senate passed its version of the IIJA, the House took up the Senate’s version and passed it as-is, rendering a conference unnecessary.)

FROM BILL INTO LAW

The image on the next page shows the steps to enactment of an authorization act.

THE U.S. LEGISLATIVE PROCESS



Appendix of advocacy resources

Background on the current federal transportation program

- [Reauthorization 101: Understanding the Process](#)
- [Infrastructure, Investment and Jobs Act](#)
- [Community Connectors Portal: A Tool for Advocates](#)

Relevant House transportation committees

- [Transportation and Infrastructure](#) (T&I): Has jurisdiction over most of the policy in the program across modes, but much work is done in the [T&I Subcommittees](#).
- [Science, Space, and Technology](#) (Science): Has jurisdiction over the research programs. Transportation legislation starts in their Research and Technology Subcommittee.
- [Ways and Means](#): Determines how the program is funded.

Relevant Senate transportation committees

- [Environment and Public Works](#) (EPW): Has jurisdiction over highways and highway planning programs, but much work is done in the [EPW Subcommittees](#).

- [Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs](#) (Banking): Has jurisdiction over transit and transit planning programs. Transportation reauthorization starts in their [Housing, Transportation, and Community Development Subcommittee](#).
- [Commerce, Science, and Transportation](#) (Commerce): Has jurisdiction over safety, trucking, pipeline and rail programs, but much of the work is done in [Commerce Subcommittees](#).
- [Finance](#): Determines how the program is funded.

Tools for outreach and communication

- [Transit Town Hall Tool Kit](#), “National Campaign for Transit Justice”
- [Citizen Centric Advocacy: The Untapped Power of Constituent Engagement](#), “Congressional Management Foundation”

COMMUNICATIONS TEMPLATES

Letter/email templates

Dear Representative [Last Name]

My name is [INSERT] and I am from [State/County/District]. I am writing to urge you to [co-sponsor, support, fight for etc.] against [cause/issue].

[benefits/set-backs of issue and statistics to back reasoning]

[personal anecdotes]

Thank you for your consideration of this issue.

[Sign off]

General Call Scripts

A phone call to an office can and should be very simple, for example, a script could be:

“Hello, my name is [First Name], and I am calling to ask that [Sen/Rep] protect the Safe Streets for All Grant Program in the upcoming Surface Transportation Reauthorization.”

You can add more information as well about why it matters to you, your community or your organization. Phone calls can be the most impactful not when they are perfect, but when they are authentic.

Sign-On Letter Format

INTRODUCTION: Open your letter with a paragraph that states your issue or cause, why it should or should not be supported, and your specific request.

BODY PARAGRAPHS: The supporting paragraphs should be organized by each reason highlighted in your introduction. For example, the first paragraph can discuss environmental reasons, the second can highlight public safety, the next can discuss statistics on economic reasons, and so on until you have made your case. Make

sure there are plenty of references in citations in these paragraphs.

SOLUTIONS: The final paragraph should focus on solutions or alternatives to your issue or cause. Point to case studies in areas that have worked or ask to co-sponsor a bill that will aid your cause.

CONCLUSIONS: Add a brief summary of your letter and sign off with your immediate call to action.

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