

FEDERAL LEGISLATIVE UPDATES

May 5, 2026

The actions of the federal government directly shape the landscape for Kansas cities. To keep you informed on developments within Congress, the White House, and federal agencies, the League provides this Federal Update. Our congressional offices have established a direct line of communication through state league directors to share information and gather your questions. For inquiries on specific federal matters, contact our government affairs director, Spencer Duncan, at sduncan@lkm.org or 785-354-9565.

This week's update:

Transportation Funding: With the current federal infrastructure act expiring this September, cities are calling on Congress to prioritize local infrastructure in the next transportation bill. The proposed BASICS Act (H.R. 7437) would shift more funding into flexible formula programs, making it easier for cities to maintain bridges and safety projects that connect communities. Now is the time to remind our federal representatives of the critical role local infrastructure plays in the Kansas network.

The BASICS Act modestly changes three major formula programs:

- **Surface Transportation Block Grant (STBG)** which invests in regional priority projects; STBG is the most flexible formula program distributed by population areas across every state and to all areas of the state.
- **Bridge Investment Program** that invests in bridges in poor condition, with a new focus on local bridges as well as state-owned bridges.
- **Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP)** adds additional safety funding to close the gap between local Safe Streets Safety Plans and State Safety Plans.

It also supports transportation planning at the urban and rural levels through Metropolitan Planning Organizations and Rural Transportation Planning Organizations to deliver today's projects and future projects. By working through existing formula funds that already deliver federal funding through long-standing regional processes, the BASICS Act leverages the existing consensus on the State Transportation Improvement Program process to move federal funding and prioritize it for regional results.

In the next two weeks, city governments should reach out to their member of Congress about local priorities to ensure community needs are on the record. Here's what to share:

1. **Ask Them to Maintain Local Access in the Next Transportation Bill:** Remind them almost half (43 percent) of the nation's federal-aid road network is owned and

maintained by local governments, and local governments have been able to start thousands of great transportation projects from IIJA. Ask them to make sure some funding is guaranteed to come back to the district and meet your needs.

2. **Share Your Transportation Needs:** Tell them about the projects and needs in your city — especially significant projects, bridges, or safety projects.
3. **Mention Federal Transportation Programs Your Community Needs:** Share the IIJA transportation programs your community wants to use or emphasize some of the ones that every community can leverage:
 - Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A)
 - Surface Transportation Block Grant (STBG)
 - BUILD Discretionary Grants (previously called RAISE)
 - Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP)
 - Bridge Investment Program (BIP).
4. **Ask Them to Cosponsor H.R. 7437 BASICS Act:** The BASICS Act supports regional priorities, bridges, and safety projects. Tell them that [cities, counties, regional organizations, public works officials, and county engineers have all endorsed](#) the BASICS Act as a bipartisan proposal to deliver streamlined funding to every region.

Contact information for Kansas' congressional delegation is below in this update.

USDA Reorganization: USDA's Research, Education, and Economics Mission Area (REE) has announced a reorganization and leadership restructuring to align its work with agency priorities. This effort refocuses REE's structure on mission delivery. The updated structure will be guided by five core principles: strengthening leadership accountability, reducing organizational complexity, ensuring consistency across agencies where appropriate, leveraging emerging tools and technologies, and aligning clearly with USDA's priorities.

REE agencies will relocate certain positions currently based in the National Capital Region (NCR) to locations across the country. The Economic Research Service (ERS) and National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) employees will relocate some positions from the NCR to their offices in Kansas City. In addition, ERS and NIFA positions that were moved to Kansas City in 2019 and have since sprawled across the country will be relocated to Kansas City, as originally intended.

The National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) will be relocating some positions located in the NCR, as well as some positions outside the NCR, to St. Louis or other NASS offices. NASS will also be maintaining a field presence to continue to collect information and provide vital statistical services to American farmers and ranchers.

The Agricultural Research Service (ARS) will begin decommissioning the Beltsville Agricultural Research Center (BARC) and relocating research programs to facilities across

the country better aligned with regional agricultural needs. BARC currently includes more than 400 buildings, many of which are outdated or underutilized, and require significant deferred maintenance and ongoing investment. ARS has evaluated its nationwide footprint to identify locations best suited to absorb ongoing research, ensuring continuity while increasing opportunities for collaboration with farmers and industry partners.

Broadband Legislation Pulled: The U.S. House Rules Committee was scheduled to consider the [American Broadband Deployment Act \(H.R. 2289\)](#), a necessary step before the bill could advance to the full House for a vote. This was done after members of Congress heard considerable concerns from cities and Leagues across the country.

The legislation, introduced by Rep. Buddy Carter (R-GA), aims to streamline broadband expansion by imposing strict federal timelines on state and local reviews. While proponents say the bill would help close the digital divide, local governments argue the requirements would overreach federal authority, weaken public safety protections, and shift costs to taxpayers.

Specifically, the bill as written would:

- **Force taxpayer subsidies.** It would replace the current “fair and reasonable” compensation standard with a strict limit based on “actual and direct costs.” This creates a new unfunded mandate that could force residents to subsidize the infrastructure costs of private corporations.
- **Allow automatic permit approvals.** The bill would codify federal “shot clocks” and add a “deemed granted” penalty. This means that if a city misses a deadline, broadband companies could start construction without local approval. This would take away a city’s ability to protect public safety and manage its streets and public rights-of-way.
- **Weaken cable franchising authority.** The legislation would permanently exempt bundled broadband services from local franchise agreements and allow providers to unilaterally modify existing agreement terms. This could significantly weaken a city’s ability to enforce local standards and services.
- **Shift dispute resolution.** The proposal would move legal disputes from local courts to the Federal Communications Commission in Washington, D.C. This would increase costs and complexity for cities when defending local interests.

While removing H.R. 2289 from the schedule is a win for local governments, federal permitting reform remains a high priority in Congress. We will continue monitoring federal legislative developments and stay in contact with congressional representatives. The League will track any renewed movement on permitting reforms that would negatively impact cities and will engage our members on the advocacy front should the bill continue to get traction.

Utility Bill Aid in Jeopardy: A proposed federal budget would eliminate the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), which currently helps nearly 6 million low-income households pay utility bills, including thousands across Kansas. The proposal comes as energy costs continue to rise, with average winter heating bills exceeding \$1,000 and utilities seeking significant rate increases. Supporters of the cut argue the program is unnecessary due to existing state protections against utility shutoffs and broader efforts to reduce federal spending. However, critics warn that eliminating LIHEAP could increase financial strain on vulnerable households, drive up utility debt, and shift costs to other ratepayers. The proposal must still be approved by Congress, where the program has historically had bipartisan support.

Congressional Contact Information

Please consider contacting your congressional office for more information.

Rep. Sharice Davids: <https://davids.house.gov/contact>

Rep. Ron Estes: <https://estes.house.gov/contact/>

Rep. Tracy Mann: <https://mann.house.gov/contact>

Rep. Derek Schmidt: <https://schmidt.house.gov/contact>

Senator Roger Marshall: <https://www.marshall.senate.gov/contact/>

Senator Jerry Moran: <https://www.moran.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/connect>