2026 Surface Transportation Reauthorization Priorities

This document outlines the American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy's priorities for the 2026 Surface Transportation Reauthorization: investments in clean freight projects that create jobs, support for underinvested communities, and strengthening local capacity to plan, finance, and deliver projects.

Support key corridors of freight charging network

To reduce fleet operating costs and to support local job growth, Congress should prioritize truck charging investments to connect ports, intermodal facilities, and truck parking along interstates. Reauthorizing National Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (NEVI) and Charging and Fueling Infrastructure (CFI) to build out the National Zero Emission Freight Corridor Strategy reduces fleets' operations costs. Investments in EV charging infrastructure can also support the local economy and jobs. According to EV Jobs Hub, 7,400 EV charging infrastructure jobs worth almost $1 billion in EV investments have been announced to date.

- **Reauthorize NEVI and CFI:** Reauthorize NEVI and CFI funding at equal levels or greater and apportion funds for dedicated medium- and heavy-duty (MDHD) zero-emissions vehicle charging.
- **Modify eligibility to permit MCS:** Modify NEVI project eligibility to allow megawatt charging systems (MCS) projects. NEVI currently requires that chargers follow the Combined Charging System (CCS) standard. The MCS standard is designed for MDHD trucks and enables them to charge faster.
- **Modify eligibility to permit multi-fleet charging depots:** Modify NEVI and CFI project eligibility to include multi-fleet charging depots. Shared charging hubs are an increasingly popular model that serves multiple fleets at semi-public locations, minimizing the upfront costs to any individual fleet and maximizing charger utilization. More information is available in an ACEEE brief.
- **Fund research and pilot projects testing emerging MDHD EV charging technologies:** Examples of cutting-edge projects that could be funded include MCS charging stations, shared charging hubs, battery swapping, and wireless charging.

CFI funding has been critical in the Southwest to lead and develop "the nation's first network" of EV chargers for heavy-duty trucks along the I-10 corridor by awarding roughly $64 million in Round 1 to the New Mexico Department of Transportation in 2024. The award is expected to fund two EV charging stations that will include megawatt charging along a key corridor from Los Angeles through the Southwest while creating local jobs.

Invest in U.S. port efficiency

Port program awards benefit communities by reducing port pollution and reducing the cost of goods movement, so Congress should reauthorize funding for programs that improve port and intermodal freight operations, such as the Port Infrastructure Development Program (PIDP) and Reduction of Truck Emissions at Port Facilities program, at equal levels.

The Port of Tacoma in Washington was awarded more than $54 million as part of the 2023 PIDP grant awards to reconfigure the terminal and improve the efficiency of truck movement in the terminal, optimize container storage, and add capacity. The project is expected to deliver benefits worth $137

million over 20 years, of which $88 million will be due to economic benefits from reduction in port operating costs, avoided increases in truck maintenance costs, travel time, and noise pollution.

- **Fund the Port Infrastructure Development Program:** Fund program at a level equal to the previous reauthorization bill and dedicate funds for improving intermodal freight connections as well as for digital and intelligent freight infrastructure and automation technologies.
- **Fund the Reduction of Truck Emissions at Port Facilities:** Fund program at a level equal to or greater than the previous reauthorization bill and apportion dedicated funds for port electrification—as a means of improving efficiency and reducing operating costs—for technologies such as shore power, electric cargo handling equipment, drayage trucks, and the necessary charging infrastructure.
- **Fund port research and pilot projects:** Fund research and projects that study cost-effective and emerging technologies that make port and port-adjacent freight operations more efficient, such as battery energy storage systems and process automation technologies (automated gates, port community systems, etc.).

Ports are an integral part of the U.S. economy, with over 95% of all cargo entering the country arriving by ship. However, ports are also a source of air pollutants such as particulate matter ($PM_{2.5}$), nitrogen oxides (NO_x), and greenhouse gas emissions, which can lead to negative health and climate impacts. According to the EPA, over 40% of the top 150 ports in the United States are in non-attainment or maintenance areas. Proximity to ports can lead to respiratory issues, premature death, and cancer for nearby communities. At least 31 million people in the continental United States (or 9% of the U.S. population) live within three miles of a major port.

Build capacity for accelerated project delivery

Transportation and refueling infrastructure investments are key to reducing costs for families and decarbonizing the economy. However, these benefits can only be fully realized if the projects are delivered in a timely manner and without significant cost overruns. Clean transportation and mobility projects may be new for many governments, especially smaller localities, and they may be unable to make needed improvements without federal funding.

- **Fund technical assistance support:** Fund support for local governments, state departments of transportation, project awardees, and projects in rural areas and underinvested communities to identify, plan for, and build transportation projects that serve their communities.
- **Prioritize funding to reduce project delays:** Dedicate funding for technical assistance to support project planning and delivery to reduce delays.
- **Demonstrate stakeholder engagement:** Continue the requirements that project applicants demonstrate stakeholder engagement with local communities in grant applications and incorporate new language in the grant application that requires applicants to demonstrate early engagement with utilities.

For MDHD and port electrification projects, funding technical assistance can help eliminate project barriers. The support should cover the application process, project implementation, workforce training, digitalization and automation technologies, and navigating permitting requirements. Technical assistance for MDHD and non-MDHD project sponsors can draw from the Thriving Communities Program approach, inviting interested capacity builders to apply and be a part of a team to provide knowledge and guidance on key aspects of implementing the project. (ACEEE case studies highlight Thriving Communities project successes in Lansing, St. Louis, Lima, and Sumter. For more information, please contact Transportation@aceee.org.)