



# Legislative UPDATE

February 16, 2018  
Number 6

## **President Releases Infrastructure Blueprint**

President Trump released his plan for how he intends for the country to rebuild its aging infrastructure. He did so at the White House on Monday to dozens of mayors from across the country, including Mayor Betsy Price, City of Fort Worth. The White House [plan](#) would create \$1.5 trillion for repairs and upgrades, of which \$200 billion would come from direct federal spending. The remainder would be leveraged from states and local governments, which would be required to match any federal allocation. Although the \$200 billion would not be new revenue (offset by cuts elsewhere), President Trump has indicated that he is open to new revenue sources.

The plan proposes to spend federal money in the following manner:

- \$100 billion for incentives to local government entities through competitive grants with preference given to applicants that raise revenue such as taxes, fees or tolls;
- \$20 billion would be spent on “bold, innovative, and transformative infrastructure projects that could dramatically improve infrastructure”;
- \$50 billion for rural block grants for transportation, broadband, water, and wastewater;
- \$20 billion to boost federal lending programs and private activity bonds used to attract private investment; and
- \$10 billion for a capital financing fund for federal infrastructure.

The President’s plan includes expedited and streamlined permitting as well as a process for consolidating reviews conducted by different agencies into a single decision maker for specific projects. The plan would also authorize the federal government to more easily divest of assets that would be better managed by state, local, or private entities.

Enactment of any provisions of the President’s plan, including funding mechanisms, is contingent upon Congressional approval of legislation.

## **Congress Approves Budget Bill Containing Harvey Relief** **Money**

Congress averted a government shutdown last week by passing a two-year budget deal that keeps the federal government open and operating. Included in that agreement is \$89.3 billion in emergency supplemental appropriations for disaster relief. That relief includes money for those affected by Hurricane Harvey. Also included in the bill is an increase in the discretionary spending cap and a suspension of the debt limit through March of 2019.

Congress will still need to enact legislation to implement the provisions of the budget agreement and each chamber's appropriations committee will spend the next few weeks drafting an omnibus appropriations bill that includes the new discretionary spending limit.

Senate leaders have agreed to use \$20 billion of that increased discretionary spending for federal infrastructure programs, including rural water and wastewater, surface transportation, and rural broadband.

Here is how Texans in Congress voted on the bill:

For:

Sen. John Cornyn (R)  
Sen. Ted Cruz (R)  
Rep. Jodey Arrington (R – Lubbock)  
Rep. Brian Babin (R – Woodville)  
Rep. Kevin Brady (R – The Woodlands)  
Rep. Michael Burgess (R – Lewisville)  
Rep. John Carter (R – Round Rock)  
Rep. Michael Conaway (R – Midland)  
Rep. Henry Cuellar (D – Laredo)  
Rep. John Culberson (R – Houston)  
Rep. Blake Farenthold (R – Corpus Christi)  
Rep. Bill Flores (R – Bryan)  
Rep. Vincente Gonzalez (D – McAllen)  
Rep. Kay Granger (R – Fort Worth)  
Rep. Al Green (D – Houston)  
Rep. Gene Green (D – Houston)  
Rep. Will Hurd (R – Helotes)  
Rep. Shelia Jackson Lee (D – Houston)  
Rep. Eddie Bernice Johnson (D – Dallas)  
Rep. Sam Johnson (R – Richardson)  
Rep. Kenny Marchant (R – Coppell)  
Rep. Michael McCaul (R – Tomball)  
Rep. Beto O'Rourke (D – El Paso)  
Rep. Pete Olson (R – Sugar Land)

Rep. Ted Poe (R – Houston)  
Rep. Pete Sessions (R – Dallas)  
Rep. Lamar Smith (R – San Antonio)  
Rep. Mac Thornberry (R – Clarendon)  
Rep. Filemon Vela (D – Brownsville)  
Rep. Randy Weber (R – Friendswood)  
Rep. Roger Williams (R – Austin)

Against:

Rep. Joe Barton (R – Ennis)  
Rep. Joaquin Castro (D – San Antonio)  
Rep. Lloyd Doggett (D – Austin)  
Rep. Louie Gohmert (R – Tyler)  
Rep. Jeb Hensarling (R – Dallas)  
Rep. John Ratcliffe (R – Heath)  
Rep. Marc Veasey (D – Fort Worth)

## **URGENT:** **Mandatory Hotel Occupancy Tax Reporting**

The 50-day window for reporting local hotel occupancy tax information is now open. The reporting period began on January 1 and closes on February 20.

During the 2017 regular session, the legislature passed [S.B. 1221](#), which aims to improve transparency about the hotel occupancy tax by requiring cities to file an annual report with the comptroller that includes the city’s hotel occupancy tax rate, the amount of revenue generated by the tax, and the amount and percentage of the revenue spent for each of the following purposes:

- Convention or information centers.
- Convention delegates registration.
- Advertising to attract tourists.
- Arts promotion and improvement.
- Historical restoration and preservation projects.
- Signage directing the public to sights and attractions.

Cities have two reporting options: (1) use the comptroller’s online reporting form to submit all required information; or (2) clearly post and maintain all required information on the city’s website and provide the comptroller’s office with a link to the information. For cities selecting the second option, the comptroller provides an [optional format template](#) to post on the city’s website.

For more information and access to the online reporting form, see the comptroller’s hotel occupancy tax reporting [webpage](#). City officials with questions about the new requirements can

also contact the comptroller's transparency team by email at [transparency@cpa.texas.gov](mailto:transparency@cpa.texas.gov) or (844) 519-5676.

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