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## INFRASTRUCTURE

**Pelosi promises long-awaited highway bill this month**

Maxine Joselow, E&amp;E News reporter • Published: Friday, January 17, 2020



House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) said yesterday that the House would take up infrastructure legislation after next week's recess. Francis Chung/E&E News

The House will release its long-awaited transportation and infrastructure legislation the week of Jan. 27, Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) said yesterday.

"When we come back that first week, we will be rolling out our infrastructure legislation, the work of more than one committee but led by [Transportation and Infrastructure Committee Chairman] Peter DeFazio," Pelosi said during a press conference.

"It's pretty exciting," she continued. "It's something we talked about during the campaign. It's something the president talked about as a priority during the campaign."

Pelosi was referring to the measure that would reauthorize the Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act, which expires in October.

It's expected to include climate change provisions, similar to the \$287 billion highway bill that unanimously passed the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee over the summer ([Greenwire](#), July 30, 2019).

That measure, [S. 2302](#), contained the first-ever climate title aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions from transportation and boosting the resilience of projects.

DeFazio previously told E&E News that he hoped to release the companion bill in February.

"I hope to be able to present my colleagues with some firm numbers and programs and policies, at least in substance, when we're back in January. And then we'll continue drafting and hopefully have a product in maybe February," the Oregon Democrat said in an interview last month ([E&E Daily](#), Dec. 20, 2019).

Pelosi's remarks appeared to indicate a slightly faster timeline for moving the bill. She appeared to be eyeing the week of Jan. 27, when the House returns from a recess following the week of Martin Luther King Jr. Day.

DeFazio's office didn't respond to a request for comment.

**'Advance climate policies'**

In a separate but related development, leaders of the House Sustainable Energy and Environment Coalition sent a [letter](#) to DeFazio and T&I Committee ranking member Sam Graves (R-Mo.) this week urging them to prioritize climate change in the highway bill.

"We urge you to use this bill as a vital legislative opportunity to advance climate policies that will protect Americans now and for generations to come," they wrote.

"A forward thinking, climate-focused highway bill will reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and localized air pollution while spurring American economic growth, job creation and competitiveness in the clean economy of the next century," they said.

The coalition leaders added, "A status quo highway bill will no longer serve the needs of our country or our planet; instead, it would risk putting us at a competitive disadvantage while leaving us all more vulnerable to the dangers of climate change."

The letter was spearheaded by SEEC Co-Chairs Gerry Connolly (D-Va.), Paul Tonko (D-N.Y.) and Doris Matsui (D-Calif.).

DeFazio has already been vocal about the need to address electric vehicles in the highway bill, including through provisions aimed at building more charging infrastructure.

"I fully intend to have a very robust electrification title as part of the [bill]," he said last month.

To that end, the highway bill could offer a consolation prize of sorts to environmentalists, who were sorely disappointed when a tax extenders package in December failed to include any incentives for energy storage or electric vehicles.

Sierra Club Executive Director Michael Brune previously blasted Democrats for backing the spending deal and said his group "cannot accept failure when it comes to protecting our climate for our children and future generations."

### Senate outlook

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) has yet to schedule a floor vote on the highway bill, much to the chagrin of business groups and transportation advocates ([E&E News PM](#), Oct. 18, 2019).

Complicating matters is the impeachment trial of President Trump, which is expected to gain steam next week with opening arguments.

McConnell has vowed to follow rules that require the Senate to meet at 1 p.m. every day except Sunday until the trial is completed.

After the trial concludes, however, the highway bill talks could advance as members look to rally around bipartisan must-pass legislation ahead of the November elections.

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