



City of Bellevue

City Manager's Office

DATE: March 18, 2024**SUBJECT:** February 2024 Federal Legislative Update

Throughout February, Congress inched closer to completing some of its work on federal funding, but the goal of sending additional aid to Ukraine and Israel and addressing border security moved further out of reach for the time being.

Other big news for February includes the announcement of plans to retire from Congress by another Washington delegation member Rep. Cathy McMorris Rodgers (R, WA-5). In early February, Rep. McMorris Rodgers, who has represented Eastern Washington and the Spokane area since 2004, announced that she would not seek another term. She currently serves as Chair of the House Energy and Commerce Committee and served as the Chair of the House Republican Conference from 2012 to 2018.

The longest serving Senate Republican leader, Mitch McConnell (R, KY), announced he will step down from his leadership post as head of the Senate Republican caucus after the elections in November. He will finish out his Senate term which runs through 2026. The top names to replace McConnell currently include Senators John Thune (SD), John Cornyn (TX), and John Barrasso (WY).

A summary of other key federal legislative and agency news for the month follows.

BUDGET AND APPROPRIATIONS:

FY 2024 Funding

Congress gave itself more time to pass annual funding legislation and avoid a government shutdown. The House and Senate moved a fourth short-term funding bill (HR 7463) to extend government funding beyond the March 1 deadline. The latest stopgap measure sets March 8th and March 22nd as the new deadlines to complete fiscal year 2024 funding legislation. The package is in line with the \$1.6 trillion fiscal 2024 top-line agreement reached by both parties in January. The House passed the measure with a vote of 320-99, including support from a majority of House Republicans. The Senate passed the bill on a 77-14 vote.

The March 8th deadlines extends funding for four appropriations bills: Agriculture-FDA, Energy and Water Development, Military Construction-VA, and Transportation-HUD. Commerce-Justice and Science and Interior bills are extended to March 22nd. Congress has reached broad agreement on these bills and full-year funding measures for all six bills are expected to pass together before or by the March 8 deadline.

The March 22nd deadline covers the remaining appropriations bills for Defense, Financial Services and General Government, Homeland Security, Labor-HHS, Legislative Branch, and State and Foreign Operations. Agreement on full-year funding measures for these bills is expected to be harder to come by.



Supplemental Foreign Aid Package for Ukraine, Israel, etc.

In mid-February, the Senate passed a \$95 billion supplemental funding bill (HR 815) to provide additional aid to Ukraine and Israel by a vote of 70-29. The bill provides \$60.1 billion for Ukraine and \$14.1 billion for Israel; \$9.2 billion for humanitarian assistance; \$4.8 billion to support Indo-Pacific allies; \$3.3 billion to enhance the US submarine industrial base; and \$3 billion to the Department of Energy for uranium production.

The measure did not include border security or immigration provisions that Republicans, especially Republicans in the House, have been insisting be included in any new foreign aid package.

The Senate action came about because the months-long negotiations to develop a bipartisan border security agreement collapsed with Donald Trump strongly criticizing it. Not surprisingly, the Senate foreign aid package was deemed as “dead on arrival” when it reached the House. House Speaker Mike Johnson (R, LA) said the House will work on its own package. The House passed a border security and immigration package (HR 2) back in May 2023. HR 2 only received Republican votes in the House and was rejected by the White House. However, it remains the border security and immigration proposal favored by most Republicans, especially hardline conservatives.

OTHER LEGISLATIVE MATTERS:

Water Resources Development Act

The House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee and Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works began consideration of the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) of 2024 reauthorization legislation in December. WRDA typically provides two-year authorization of the programs and projects administered by the US Army Corp of Engineers Civil Works Division. This includes projects related to ports, harbors, waterway navigation, flood and storm protection and other water resources infrastructure.

The Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works held its first WRDA hearing of the year on February 28th. According to committee leadership, WRDA 2024 will continue to focus on project solutions and efficiencies and full implementation of improvements made in previous WRDA bills. According to the committee’s Ranking Member Shelley Moore Capito (R, WV), WRDA 2024 will focus on authorizing new or tweaking existing studies and projects, as well as making technical changes to previous iterations of the legislation. “This limited scope will enable the Corps to focus the energy and resources on fully implementing prior WRDA provisions, which will ensure that the Agency continues to be responsive to water resource needs,” she said. While the committee chairs may seek to limit the scope of the bill, it’s clearly going to get a lot of attention from lawmakers. Over 1200 requests were submitted to the committee by various Senators.

FAA Reauthorization

On February 29, the House voted to extend the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) funding authority for a third time until May 10. Authorization for the FAA expired on September 30, 2023. The most recent extension provides the Senate more time to work out a deal to pass the reauthorization. The House passed a five-year reauthorization bill for the FAA in July. The House bill authorizes \$4 billion per fiscal year for the Airport Improvement Program, directs the



FAA administrator to develop a plan to expand the agency's ability to train air traffic controllers, clarifies language on ticket refunds and addresses safety on runways.

The Senate Commerce Committee was able to move a five-year reauthorization bill out of committee with bipartisan support at the beginning of February. It's uncertain when the bill might reach the Senate floor, however. Disagreements remain in the Senate related to pilot training requirements. Key details of the Senate FAA reauthorization bill can be found in the [Senate FAA Bill Summary](#)

AGENCY AND ADMINISTRATION ACTION:

The **President's State of the Union address** will be on March 7. It's expected President Biden will use this opportunity to lay out his administration's achievements and outline second term proposals. Biden will highlight investments in infrastructure and climate proposals (Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and Inflation Reduction Act) and the 2022 CHIPS and Science Act. He will also advocate for new proposals to increase taxes on the wealthy and corporations and pledge to lower prescription drug prices and protect abortion rights.

The release of the Administration's **fiscal year 2025 budget proposal** is expected a few days later on March 11.

Announcements during February from the Administration and executive agencies include the following.

Child Care Costs

On February 29, the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) finalized new rules related to the Child Care & Development Block Grant (CCDBG) program. The intent of the new rules is to help make child care more affordable. The ruling will:

- Cap co-payments for families participating in CCDBG to no more than 7 percent of income;
- Encourage states to eliminate co-payments entirely for families of children with disabilities, children experiencing homelessness, children in foster care, children in Head Start, and families at or below 150 percent of the federal poverty level;
- Direct states to pay child care providers more fairly and on time; and
- Make it easier for families to access CCDBG subsidies by encouraging states to streamline eligibility and enrollment processes and reduce red tape that can disrupt parent employment, training, and education.

Funding Awards

Airport Terminal Program Grant Awards

The Federal Aviation Administration announced that 114 airports across the country received grant awards to improve the passenger experience and efficiency of airports. Two airports in Washington state received funding awards:

- \$10.4 million to SeaTac International Airport – funds a portion of the widening of the arrivals terminal access road and realigns departure access road and associated infrastructure.



- \$2 million to Spokane International Airport – funds are for two additional ticket counters and passenger boarding bridges, funds will also be used for HVAC, electrical and other system improvements.

Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant Awards

Department of Energy (DOE) announced that \$17.28 million was awarded to states, local government and tribes to improve energy efficiency and to help low-income residents save money. Two programs from Washington state received awards:

- \$2.27 million to Washington State to fund a grant program to build capacity for clean energy transition in underserved climate justice communities.
- \$76,450 to Lynnwood, WA, to install two EV chargers at the City Hall campus as part of the city fleet electrification plan.

Public Transportation Emergency Relief Program Awards

FTA announced that approximately \$110 million in funding was awarded to [eight public transportation providers and State DOT's](#) in six states and one territory to help recover from recent natural disasters. The funding will help them repair damaged equipment and facilities and recoup costs for evacuation and rescue operations following floods, hurricanes, and tornadoes that occurred in 2017 and 2020-22.

TIFIA loan to North Carolina Turnpike Authority

A TIFIA loan for up to \$417.2 million was awarded to finalize the last section of the Triangle Expressway Loop in the greater Raleigh, NC, area.

Funding Notices

Clean Water Funds & PFAS Funding

EPA announced funding levels for the Clean Drinking Water and Clean Water State Revolving Funds. Over \$3.2 billion will be available through the Clean Drinking Water State Revolving Fund and \$2.6 billion will be available through the Clean Water State Revolving Fund. It was also announced that \$1 billion will be dedicated to addressing PFAS or “forever chemicals”.

Washington state will receive an allocation of over \$113 million to be made available for drinking water and clean water infrastructure upgrades. Local governments can apply for loans and/or grants through the states for these funds. Clean Water State Revolving funds can be used for the improvement of wastewater, sanitation, and stormwater infrastructure.

\$580 million for Safe Streets and Road for All Implementation Grant Program.

This USDOT program provides grants for the implementation of local safety initiatives to prevent death and serious injury on roads and streets.

\$656.7 million Safe Streets and Roads for All Grant Program for Planning and Demonstration Grants

USDOT grants support the buildout of comprehensive safety plans (action plans) and demonstration projects.

The City of Bellevue won a \$2,787,894 grant during the FY 2023 round of this grant program to **conduct supplemental planning activities including, road safety audits, speed studies,**



development of a separated bike lane design guide, and creation of speed safety camera procedures.

\$150 million Safeguarding Tomorrow through Ongoing Risk Mitigation (STORM)

FEMA grant program that provides funding to states to establish revolving loan funds for project that reduce the risk of disasters, natural hazards, and other environmental issues.

\$37 million Electric Drive Vehicle Battery Recycling and Second Life Applications grant program. Grants will support research, development, and demonstration of second-life applications for electric drive vehicle batteries that have been used to power electric drive vehicles, and technologies and processes for final recycling and disposal of the electric drive vehicle batteries.

\$18 million Communities Sparking Investments in Transformative Energy (C-SITE) funding program. Under the new program, \$18 million will be awarded to implement municipal or tribal-led, high-impact clean energy projects in disadvantaged communities, energy communities, small- and medium-sized cities and towns, and Tribal communities.

\$15 million Complete Streets AI Initiative for Small Businesses.

USDOT is hoping to leverage the talent of US small businesses to make advancements in artificial intelligence (AI) to improve transportation. According to the department [announcement](#), "...up to 10 Phase I contract will be awarded to small businesses to develop data and analytics capabilities that drive insights for agencies developing complete streets."

\$1.5 billion to support Low-and-No Emission buses and bus facilities. The Federal Transit Administration [announced](#) the availability of \$1.5 billion to support state and local efforts to modernize aging transit fleets with low- and no-emission buses, renovate and construct bus facilities, and support workforce development.

\$5 billion to launch semiconductor research consortium.

National Semiconductor Technology Center (NSTC) will be a consortium that will invest funds into workforce development and intends to open funding applications in early March for research grants. The CHIPS Act set aside \$39 billion in manufacturing incentives and \$11 billion for research and development to revive the American chip industry.

\$100 million Carbon Utilization Grant Program

DOE will award grants to help develop a commercially viable carbon dioxide removal industry. The funding will support pilot projects and testing facilities to demonstrate and scale carbon dioxide removal technologies.

\$12 million WaterSMART

This Bureau of Reclamation program provides grants and cooperative agreements to support small-scale (less than \$225,000) on-the-ground water efficiency projects. The program is designed to help western states mitigate drought and other water quality issues. Local authorities in western states and with water and or power delivery authority are eligible.



BELLEVUE FEDERAL ACTIVITIES:

In 2021, Congress reopened the process for consideration of congressionally directed spending requests in appropriations bills. These “earmark” funds by Congress have become a regular part of the annual congressional appropriations process since that time. The House and Senate Appropriations Committees typically open the process for funding requests and release guidance for these requests after the Administration releases its annual budget proposal. The House and Senate rules are often similar but not exactly the same. Each chamber determines which federal funding accounts will be open for earmark funding requests and the general rules around eligibility and deadlines. Projects selected for funding are bound by the rules and regulations established under the US Code for the federal budget accounts from which funding is provided. For example, federal labor, anti-discrimination and materials standards apply to almost all federal funds. Earmark funding requests are generally one-time funding requests for projects that are below \$3 million; are “shovel-ready” because funds must be obligated within the fiscal year; and have broad community support.

FY 2024 Appropriations Earmarks

Congress released budgetary language and details of the first six appropriations bills covering Agriculture-FDA, Energy and Water Development, Military Construction-VA, Transportation-HUD, Commerce-Justice and Science and Interior bills. The three earmark requests that Bellevue’s federal delegation put forward on behalf of the city for FY 24 were included in the compromise bill package. These include:

Amount	Project	Supporting Member
\$1 million	Bellevue & Redmond Electric Fire Engines and Charging Infrastructure.	Rep. DelBene
\$963,000	Bellevue Police Body-worn Camera Program	Sen. Cantwell & Rep. DelBene
\$500,000	Digital Equity for Affordable Housing	Sen. Cantwell & Rep. Smith

Congress still needs to pass the compromise budget package of appropriations bills.

FY 2025 Federal Funding

Bellevue’s leadership team and federal affairs team have initiated the process to consider and prepare federal congressional earmark requests for the FY 2025 budget cycle. Strategic conversations with Bellevue’s departments on funding opportunities and priorities took place in January and February. The leadership and federal team are in the process of mapping out the city’s approach for the FY 25 budget process and vetting the city’s funding request ideas with our delegation members. The leadership and federal team will prepare for request submissions as soon as congressional offices open their funding request portals. It is expected that funding requests will be due by the end of March to mid-April.