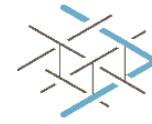




ASSOCIATION OF
METROPOLITAN
PLANNING
ORGANIZATIONS



NARC

Building Regional Communities

National Association of Regional Councils

Dear Congress and Administration:

On behalf of the Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations (AMPO), National Association of Development Organizations (NADO) and National Association of Regional Councils (NARC), we are writing to express our support for stronger and more robust federal incentives, resources and policies that promote regional collaboration and intergovernmental partnerships, coordinated strategic public infrastructure and transportation investments, and sustainable community and economic growth.

As the three premier national membership organizations for the nation's regional councils of governments, regional development organizations and metropolitan planning organizations, our members provide vital regional and local planning, program implementation and leadership support for local government elected officials and staff, as well as community, business and civic leaders.

We are pleased to present a series of federal policy recommendations for your consideration. The proposed items focus on improving intergovernmental collaboration, fostering enhanced regional cooperation among local government officials and coordinating strategic investments of public resources, particularly in the areas of transportation, economic and community development, homeland security and environmental stewardship.

When examining the existing and emerging set of challenges facing our nation, both globally and domestically, it becomes apparent that we must collectively rethink and refocus our policy and programmatic approaches to sustainable community, economic and infrastructure development. Our recommendations seek to build upon the proven track records, lessons learned and organizational strengths of the existing national network of regional councils of governments, regional development organizations and metropolitan planning organizations to help enhance our nation's global competitiveness, economic growth, employment sustainability, environmental stewardship, and safety and security.

We look forward to working with you and your staff to advance our shared vision and goals for the nation. AMPO, NARC and NADO look forward to working with you and your staff.

Sincerely,

The Honorable John Rowell
Member, Moorhead,
Minnesota City Council
President, AMPO

Sharon Juon
Executive Director,
Iowa Northland Regional COG
President, NADO

The Honorable Betty Knight
Presiding Commissioner,
Platte County, Missouri
President, NARC

2009 Regional Agenda Recommendations



ASSOCIATION OF
METROPOLITAN
PLANNING
ORGANIZATIONS

NADO
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATIONS



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PREPARING AND STRENGTHENING OUR NATION FOR THE FUTURE

WHAT IS OUR NATION FACING?

The United States is at a crossroads, struggling to balance the pressing infrastructure needs with environmental and security issues, while fostering economic and community sustainability and growth.

WHAT IS THE STATUS OF OUR INFRASTRUCTURE?

Infrastructure (highways, transit, water, sewer, etc.) serves as an essential building block for our nation's communities and regions. It supports local economies, development and investment, employment, quality of life and the safety and security of the nation. However, the demands of our growing population base, dynamic shifts in global trade and decades of underinvestment in our nation's infrastructure have placed us at a tipping point.

HOW CAN WE ADDRESS THESE CHALLENGES?

To be successful in the long term, our nation must invest in regionally-based, locally-driven strategic planning, project development and investment decision-making that leverages our limited public and private resources, supports sustainable economic and community development, and advances our nation's economic competitiveness. In addition, stronger federal policies, incentives and regulatory flexibility is needed to allow state and local government officials, including through regional councils, regional development organizations and metropolitan planning organizations, to link and coordinate regional strategies and investments related to community and economic development, emergency preparedness, housing, growth management, transportation and workforce development.

WHAT ARE REGIONAL PLANNING ORGANIZATIONS?

Regional Councils of Governments, Regional Development Organizations and Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) continuously maintain and improve our nation's communities by fostering innovative solutions that provide sustainability to regions through strategic design, creating partnerships and cross-linking towns, cities, counties and states.

Regional Councils of Governments and Regional Development Organizations compose the national network of 520 multi-jurisdictional (and, in some cases, multi-state), local government-based planning and development organizations, including the network of 380 Economic Development Districts designated by the U.S. Department of Commerce's Economic Development Administration.

Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) refers to the national network of 385 organizations established through federal transportation law (U.S. Code Title 23, Chapter 1, Section 134) to serve as the lead transportation planning organizations for areas with a population of 50,000 or more. Of the existing MPOs, about half are administered, housed or staffed by a Regional Council, with the remaining MPOs operated within a state, county or city planning office or by a stand-alone nonprofit entity.

AMPO-NADO-NARC

JOINT POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

As the national voices for regional planning organizations serving our nation's local governments, AMPO, NADO and NARC offer our support and assistance on federal efforts to help shape the areas of transportation, economic and community development, homeland security and environmental stewardship, ensuring the regional perspective, which impacts hundreds of millions of Americans nationwide, is represented. We recommend the following for consideration and action by the Administration and Congress to assist in improving national infrastructure and facilitating economic opportunities to bolster global competitiveness.

- **Expand federal incentives, policies and resources to reward and support regionally-driven, locally-controlled planning, program development and project delivery**, including in the areas of community development, economic development, environmental stewardship, transportation and workforce development
- **Strengthen the nation's intergovernmental partnership framework of federal, state and local government officials**, including the active participation of regional councils of governments, regional development organizations and metropolitan planning organizations who are governed primarily by local elected and appointed government officials
- **Encourage federal policies that promote regional cross-cutting collaboration and leverage resources** among community and economic development, land use, emergency preparedness, mobility and safety, transportation, environment and workforce development initiatives
- **Upgrade federal support and activities for more robust and timely national, statewide and sub-state regional data** that are required to enhance regional and local economic development, infrastructure, transportation and workforce development strategies, investments and decision making
- **Invigorate significant attention, a renewed national commitment and sustained federal investment for our aging infrastructure**, including bridges, highways, rail, ports, mass transit, and water and sewer systems, to improve safety, the environment, interconnectivity and commerce
- **Further develop policies to build regional economies that support sustainable, workable and livable communities** by integrating and coordinating local economic development, transportation and growth management strategies on a regional basis
- **Provide new and stronger federal incentives, resources and regulatory flexibility for regional organizations and their local government partners to coordinate, leverage and cross-link strategies, programs and investments** dealing with interrelated issues such as transportation, housing and economic development opportunities with environmental considerations

REGIONAL SHOWCASES: TRANSLATING PLANS INTO ACTION



Association of Monterey Bay Area Governments

Monterey, California

The Association of Monterey Bay Area Governments (AMBAG) developed an energy inventory as part of its regional plan to reduce greenhouse gases to 1990 levels by 2020. The inventory includes local building capacities, energy conservation and efficiencies, clean renewable energy sources and distribution, and the impacts of transportation. This effort has resulted in reconnecting planning and implementation for positive environmental results throughout the region by reducing annual energy consumption by 26,000,00 kWh and implementing Green Building programs in all 21 jurisdictions.



Atlanta Regional Commission

Atlanta, Georgia

Among its broad range of programs and services, the Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC) provides workforce development services to more than 40,000 individuals each year through the U.S. Department of Labor's Workforce Investment Act. ARC has established career transition centers at Ford Motor Company, General Motors and Panasonic. The group recently secured a \$2 million Base Realignment and Closing Grant for the transition of workers at Fort Gillem, Fort McPherson and the Naval Supply Corps. In August 2006, Georgia Governor Perdue announced the Work Ready initiative to align economic development with workforce development. ARC has lead in the implementation of the Work Program initiative, in addition to assisting member counties to attain Work Region Community certification. The ARC Workforce Division Chief was appointed to the National Governor's Association Policy Academy state team to study industry strategies which build the industry through workforce intervention. ARC was instrumental in the establishment of the state's first region aligned to the BioScience industry and has lead in the implementation of an industry network, education pathways for bioscience beginning in middle school and economic development strategies to encourage BioScience industries to locate within the "Innovation Crescent." Currently, ARC is involved in the development of a logistics industry sector strategy.



Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning

Chicago, Illinois

The Chicago Metropolitan Agency (CMAP) addresses transportation, land use and other comprehensive planning issues from a regional perspective as a key partner on the Chicago Region Environmental and Transportation Efficiency Program (CREATE) project. CREATE is a public-private partnership and project of national and regional significance that will invest \$1.5 billion in critically needed rail infrastructure improvements to move one-third of the nation's freight rail traffic into and through metropolitan Chicago. Each day, about 1,200 trains pass through the region, powering the Illinois economy with more than 38,000 rail-related jobs, \$1.7 billion in annual wages and \$22 billion in annual economic value to the region's manufacturers and businesses. CREATE has 43 active projects, many of which are in the environment stage with ten expected to move to construction in 2008. Upon completion, CREATE will improve quality of life, economic opportunities and environmental concerns. The installation of new grade crossing overpasses or underpasses will reduce traffic congestion, saving Chicago-area motorists a collective average of 3,000 hours/day and providing shorter commuting times, eliminate accidents and injuries, and provide new, more direct routes for police and fire emergency vehicles. It will enhance air quality by reducing emissions, noise and pollution from autos, trucks and trains, and restoring green space near the lakefront. It will bolster jobs and economic opportunity by sustaining, at minimum, 17,000 jobs and \$2 billion in annual economic production over 20 years, while saving shippers an estimated \$40 million annually in reduced inventory costs.

Gulf Regional Planning Commission

Biloxi, Mississippi Metro Area

The Gulf Regional Planning Commission (GRPC), the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the Biloxi, Mississippi metro area, recently developed an Emergency Transit Operations Plan for the Mississippi Gulf Coast to efficiently operate and retain public transportation services after a major event or disaster. After Hurricanes Rita and Katrina, the importance of maintaining public transportation operations was identified as a top priority by the MPO and local communities. The MPO engaged a committee of stakeholders, identified a phased action plan for pre-event and recovery, coordinated with local emergency planning programs, and addressed existing gaps to ensure a regional response.



Gulf Regional
Planning Commission

Serving the Governments of the Mississippi Gulf Coast

Lenowisco Planning District Commission and Cumberland Plateau Planning District Commission

Southwest Appalachia Virginia

The Lenowisco Planning District Commission (PDC) and Cumberland Plateau PDC in southwest Virginia have provided invaluable leadership in bringing clean and safe drinking water to thousands of residents within their rugged, mountainous regions. In 1997, the seven counties covered by these two PDCs had just slightly more than 50 percent of residents with public water services. Today, three of seven rural counties have 78 percent of their citizens connected to regional and local water systems, and the remaining four counties are at nearly 70 percent. In addition, the two PDCs have established high-speed regional broadband systems in this severely underserved rural region. When the work crews of the two PDCs lay down PVC pipes for new water connections and systems, they also typically deploy new fiber optic cables as part of their broadband programs. More than 3,000 new jobs have been created and more than \$105 million in private sector investments made within these two regions since 2003 as part of the broadband initiatives.



Maricopa Association of Governments

Phoenix, Arizona

The Maricopa Association of Governments (MAG) formed an Information Center to provide timely, in-depth and technical data for various regional planning activities, including transportation, water quality, air quality, solid waste, human services, urban growth and development and infrastructure planning, for its high growth region. This project is in response to the pressing need for enhanced data within the region as Maricopa County gained 696,000 new residents between 2000-2006, the largest numerical increase of all of the nation's counties. To put this population growth into perspective, the U.S. Census Bureau noted, "This increase surpasses the total population of all but 15 U.S. cities."



Metropolitan Transportation Commission

San Francisco Bay Area, California

The Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) provided the leadership and funding for the region's transit operators to reduce diesel bus pollution. In a nation-leading demonstration project, AC Transit rolled out three zero-emission, hydrogen fuel-cell buses on East Bay streets in 2006. A dozen local transit operators are also retrofitting their diesel bus fleets with state-of-the-art exhaust filters. Recognizing the limitations of relying only on equipment upgrades for improved air quality, MTC ramped up its efforts to change commuter habits on smoggy days by offering free transit rides on Spare the Air days. Transit ridership jumped 15 percent in the summer of 2006 in response. In addition, MTC helped create a regional climate change initiative managed by a joint policy committee consisting of MTC, the Air District, the Association of Bay Area Governments and the Bay Conservation and Development Commission. The regional partnership alliance is pursuing an aggressive action plan to address climate change issues on a regional basis.



METROPOLITAN
TRANSPORTATION
COMMISSION



Mid-America Regional Council

Kansas City, Missouri

Mid-America Regional Council

The Mid-America Regional Council (MARC) is currently working to better incorporate conservation into transportation planning in the Kansas City region.

In early 2008, MARC was awarded funding from the Federal Highway Administration's Eco-Logical grant program to create a regional green infrastructure mitigation plan, conduct professional development and community engagement exercises to build a better understanding of Eco-Logical principles and approaches, and refine an action plan that was initially drafted at the Linking Conservation and Transportation Planning workshop in February 2008. This work to shape a strategy for better integrating environmental and transportation planning will impact the next update of the MPO long-range transportation plan, and create a more sustainable regional transportation system.



National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board

Washington, DC Metro Area

Metropolitan Washington
Council of Governments

The massive Woodrow Wilson Bridge, linking Maryland and Virginia on I-95/I-495, was carrying more than three times the number of vehicles it was originally designed to accommodate,

by the late 1980s. An EIS process which identified several alternatives for expanding capacity was halted in 1991 and restarted under a new direction tied tightly to the MPO planning process of the National Capital Regional Transportation Planning Board (NCRTPB). In 1992, the project sponsors set up the Woodrow Wilson Bridge Coordination Committee to identify a consensus solution. In 1996, the Coordination Committee agreed upon the design of the bridge that is near completion today. The coordinating, planning and leadership efforts of NCRTPB, along with the numerous federal, state and local partners, played an important role in completing this vital project safely, on-time and within the \$2.5 billion budget.



Northwest New Mexico Council of Governments

Gallup, New Mexico

For the past 15 years, the Northwest New Mexico Council of Governments has led the planning and implementation of a complex water supply project valued at more than \$1 billion. The Navajo-Gallup Water Supply Project is focused on identifying and securing a sustainable water supply for the high-desert, parched lands of the eastern reaches of the Navajo Reservation, City of Gallup and the southwestern portions of the Jicarilla Apache Reservation. The initiative aims to provide clean and reliable water through a new regional municipal system to more than 200,000 residents of 43 rural tribal communities of the Navajo Nation, nearly half of whose residents have never had access to a public water supply. The nearly 23,000 residents of the City of Gallup will also benefit directly, along with approximately 100,000 people, predominantly Native American, who use Gallup as a central commerce area. By working regionally and in a cooperative spirit, the group is overcoming a variety of barriers and challenges, including cultural, financial, legal, political and technical issues.



Ohio-Kentucky-Indiana Regional Council of Governments

Cincinnati, Ohio

The Ohio-Kentucky-Indiana Regional Council of Governments (OKI) was recognized by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) for its pioneering efforts in incorporating benefit-cost analysis into transportation planning. Benefit-cost analysis compares savings in travel time, costs and safety as well as emissions to the construction and maintenance costs of a transportation project. If the benefits of the project outweigh the costs, then the project becomes more valuable economically. The integration of this analysis into OKI's evaluation and prioritization of transportation projects is helping guide the allocation of scarce transportation resources.

Regional Transportation Commission of Southern Nevada

Las Vegas, Nevada

The Regional Transportation Commission (RTC) of Southern Nevada has aggressively sought public-private funding opportunities to deliver projects in a more timely, cost-efficient and environmentally-sensitive manner. Some examples are as follows:

- Silverado Ranch Interchange: Between early September 2006 and October 2007, a major \$38.7 million interchange project at I-15 and Silverado Ranch Blvd. was completed. The South Point Hotel and Casino contributed about \$5 million to expedite the construction project and ensure its timely completion.
- Auto Show Drive Interchange: In January 2006, the Auto Show Drive interchange project was completed. The Auto Mall Association contributed \$1.7 million toward the \$34 million project. This initial funding allowed the project to move into the design phase.
- Summerlin Parkway: The Hughes Corp. spent approximately \$25 million to build three miles of Summerlin Parkway from Rainbow Boulevard to Town Center Drive. Initial funding for Summerlin Parkway, along with other utilities and roads, came from a Special Improvement District created through bonds issues by the City of Las Vegas. At \$74 million, it was the largest developer-driven Special Improvement District in Nevada's history.



SEDA-COG

Lewisburg, Pennsylvania

SEDA-COG formed the SEDA-COG Joint Rail Authority (JRA) to save several short-line railroads in central Pennsylvania that were slated for abandonment by Conrail. Without access to regional and national rail lines, a number of major employers in this rural, 11-county region would have been forced to close or relocate. These include Corning Glass, High Steel (makes steel products used in highway construction), Staiman Recycling (a scrap metal dealer), Williamsport Wire rope (makes industrial steel cables) and Sylco Service and Terminal Company (a fertilizer blend company). Today, SEDA-COG JRA owns five rail lines covering nearly 200 miles and serving more than 75 customers.



Three Rivers Planning and Development District

Pontotoc, Mississippi

The Three Rivers Planning and Development District (PDD) formed a three-county regional alliance, known as the PUL Alliance, to develop a mega-industrial site within this rural region of northeast Mississippi. Recognizing the economic forces of globalization and continuing loss of furniture manufacturing jobs within the region, the three rural counties agreed to share site acquisition and site marketing costs equally, as well as any later property tax revenues. The Three Rivers PDD provides the management and operations support for the three-county alliance, including coordination and implementation of transportation, infrastructure, land purchasing and workforce training projects. As a result of this unique regional partnership, Toyota Motor Corporation is now building a \$1.2 billion, 5,000-employee manufacturing plant on a 1,730-acre industrial site in Blue Springs, Mississippi. The company's original plan was to build the Highlander SUV at the facility, however the site will now build the energy-efficient, hybrid model Prius. Dozens of suppliers are also locating within the multi-state region as a result of the Toyota plant.



ABOUT OUR NATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

The **ASSOCIATION OF METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATIONS (AMPO)** is a national membership organization established in 1994 to serve the needs and interests of metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs) nationwide.

Federal highway and transit statutes require, as a condition for spending federal highway or transit funds in urbanized areas, the designation of MPOs, which have responsibility for planning, programming and coordination of federal highway and transit investments. AMPO offers its member MPOs technical assistance and training, conferences and workshops, frequent print and electronic communications, research, a forum for transportation policy development and coalition building, and a variety of other services.



AMPO Contact:

DeLania Hardy, Executive Director, at 202.296.7051 ext 3 or dhardy@ampo.org
www.AMPO.org

The **NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATIONS (NADO)** provides advocacy, education, networking and research for the nation's regional development organizations. Established in 1967 as a national public official association, NADO promotes public policies that strengthen local governments, communities and economies through the regional strategies, coordination efforts and program expertise of the nation's regional development organizations. The association focuses on community and economic development, environmental stewardship, homeland security and emergency preparedness, business development finance, transportation and workforce development issues.



NADO Contact:

Matthew Chase, Executive Director, at 202.624.5947 or mchase@nado.org
www.NADO.org

The **NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF REGIONAL COUNCILS (NARC)** is a national trade organization that works to strengthen and assist member multi-jurisdictional regional councils and MPOs through advocacy, research and technical assistance in transportation, economic development, emergency preparedness and the environment to help solve local problems regionally, positively impacting America's communities. For over 40 years, NARC has advanced regional cooperation through effective interaction and advocacy with Congress, Federal officials, other related agencies and interest groups. NARC's Board of Directors is composed of local elected officials and executive directors of member organizations.



NARC Contact:

Fred Abousleman, Executive Director, at 202.986.1032 ext 216 or fred@narc.org
www.NARC.org