

ISSUE BRIEF: Homeland Security

National Issue, Regional Solutions

Since September 11, 2001, homeland security has played a pivotal role in shaping the activities and policies of organizations around the country. Both manmade and natural disasters require communities and regions to plan, prepare and respond accordingly. Adequate federal funding and increased regional authority are needed for regional development of interoperability, preparedness and response. These functions are invaluable resources to our nation's citizens and the communities they live. **The National Association of Regional Councils (NARC)** is working to expand and implement innovative homeland security initiatives that will strengthen the role of Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) and Council of Governments (COGs).

Currently, NARC is in the process of finalizing language for the **Department of Homeland Security fiscal year 2008 authorization bill** to reinforce and foster homeland security opportunities for MPOs and COGs through expanded authority in existing programs and the introduction of a new grant program that will provide funding for MPOs and COGs to develop and/or improve regional coordination plans for emergency and disaster preparedness, response, and recovery.

The fiscal year 2007 Department of Homeland Security authorization bill (PL 109-295) requires for the ten Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Regional Administrators to establish

Regional Advisory Councils in every region. These Councils will be comprised of federal, state, regional and local representation to advise the Regional Administrator of emergency management issues within the region that might complicate preparedness, protection, response, recovery or mitigation efforts. NARC called upon its members to submit nominations and has sent its support for those individuals.

To best serve its members and build regionalism, NARC is designing the foundation for a **Regional Homeland Security Institute**. This will be a premiere research, information and best practices organization to be formed within the NARC structure that will focus solely on improving, expanding and promoting homeland security functions for MPOs and COGs throughout the United States. It will provide regional councils with the tools and simplified government information needed to successfully execute planning, preparation and response.

In coordination with FEMA, NARC has proposed and is working to develop **homeland security "case studies"** which will be used to highlight best practices, methodology and examples of how regional councils are directly involved in homeland security activities. These intend to feature regional councils that are small, large, rural and urban, demonstrating the significance of their work in disaster management.

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