



TALKING POINTS TRANSPORTATION

The National Association of Regional Councils (NARC) supports the existence and continued operations of **Councils of Government (COGs)** and **Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs)** of all sizes – large, small, urban and rural – in transportation planning and programming to promote regional solutions to national transportation needs that support economic growth, environmental sustainability, and enhanced mobility for all.

REGIONAL COUNCIL ROLE – Regional planning is essential to the construction of infrastructure to move people, goods and services across our surface transportation network, continually bolstering our economy. Since the late 1960's, Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) have, through federal law, funding and recognition, directed the construction and maintenance of transportation infrastructure in urban areas with more than 50,000 people. MPOs and Councils of Government (COGs) perform comprehensive planning with substantial public input and have a strong interest in maintaining a safe and efficient multi-modal transportation system to support regional initiatives.

REGIONAL AUTHORITY & RESOURCES – The success of regional planning is contingent upon proper authority for local elected officials and adequate resources to build capacity for greater regional cooperation in addressing the following key issues: integration of urban, suburban and rural interests; efficient goods movement; transportation safety planning; environmental mitigation; good decision-making; and, the future financing of our transportation system.

COOPERATION – The cooperation between and integration of rural, suburban and urban regions will bolster the American economy. All policies must prioritize the linkages between regions, regardless of size, and support transportation planning to maximize the authority, funding and future for regions.

FINANCING – The future of our country's transportation system is in question. With a soon-to-be insolvent Highway Trust Fund and without other funds to support a national multi-modal transportation system, our country will be unable to compete in a global marketplace, sustain jobs and strengthen the overall national economy. Innovative transportation financing mechanisms that empower COGs and MPOs and capitalize on their vast experience must be explored to meet regional needs. These mechanisms include, but are not limited to: additional taxing at all levels of government; Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) and other user-based fees; and, public private partnerships (PPPs) that do not undermine public authority in managing infrastructure.

One good example of PPPs is Regional Infrastructure Improvement Zones (RIIZs). RIIZs would encourage private-sector involvement in the building and construction of infrastructure and would not require the selling or leasing of infrastructure, but would allow private corporations or individuals to contribute funds toward the maintenance and construction of all infrastructure as predetermined by the regional organization.

SAFETY – Safety is paramount in establishing and maintaining an efficient multi-modal transportation network with COGs and MPOs serving as a primary leader in transportation safety planning activities. Policy and program changes are necessary to reduce the inconsistencies surrounding COG/MPO participation in safety planning and better incorporate regional transportation interests into state safety planning programs.

FREIGHT – Goods movement is the backbone of America's commerce and requires a high degree of coordination between multiple modes of transportation – highways, ports, railroads and airlines. Connectivity and easy access between these modes is integral to freight mobility and the resulting economic prosperity and community development. For these reasons and many others, freight and goods movement should have a dedicated funding source and be incorporated in our national surface transportation program at the federal, state, regional and local levels. COGs and MPOs are well positioned to coordinate the freight interests within the regional context of transportation, economic development and environmental planning.

DATA & TECHNOLOGY – Transportation planning and decision-making rely on the most up-to-date data available to create models that forecast future transportation and land-use needs. Policy and program changes are needed at all levels of government to improve data collection and promulgation, and the technology available to aid in regional planning to address emerging transportation, land-use and environmental issues.