



NARC

Building Regional Communities

National Association of Regional Councils

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ECONOMIC RECOVERY LEGISLATION TALKING POINTS

Please use to guide phone conversations or in-person meetings with Congressional Members and/or staff.

IMMEDIATE ACTION: *Please support the economic recovery package under development by Congress to rebuild our economy with direct local and regional infrastructure funding as a first and necessary step in defining a federal commitment to upgrading our infrastructure nationwide, while protecting our environment, boosting the economy and creating jobs.*

- **SETTING THE STAGE:** The infrastructure inadequacies plaguing our communities – crumbling bridges, aging highways, rail, ports, and mass transit, and deteriorating water and sewer systems – are in dire need of maintenance and improvement. In fact, the American Society of Civil Engineers estimates that \$1.6 trillion is needed over a five-year period in federal, state and local funds, not accounting for population growth, to bring the nation's infrastructure to an acceptable condition.
- **JOBS CREATION:** From December 2007 through October 2008, the economy lost 1,078,000 jobs, 508,000 jobs in the construction industry alone. According to the Associated General Contractors of America, for every \$1 billion in government infrastructure spending, 28,000 new jobs are created and, to date, over 52,000 skilled construction employees are now out of work and ready to put a shovel to the ground.
- **BOOST THE ECONOMY:** Mark Zandi, Chief Economist for Moody's Economy.com has found that the "boost to GDP from a dollar spent on building new bridges and schools is estimated to be a large \$1.59." He argues "if infrastructure projects can be identified that could be started quickly then this could prove to be an efficacious form of fiscal stimulus."
- **POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS:** Please consider the following recommendations for inclusion in the economic recovery package:
 - **Fund "ready-to-go" projects through an equitable distribution by established formula allocation such as the Surface Transportation Program (STP), Clean Water State Revolving Fund, Community Development Block Grant, Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant and and Economic Development Administration (EDA) programs (as grants without match requirements) to drive monies directly to the local level – both rural and urban.** Maintaining a strong focus on the priorities of local communities, acting in partnership with their regional planning organizations, ensures broad buy-in for regional and local projects, provides transparency and accountability in the process, and ties investments closely to our region's needs.
 - **Require States to engage with local governments – urban and rural – in project selection beyond the distributed funds.** Moving local projects forward is key to stimulating the economy and job creation success. Regional agencies and our governing boards of appointed and local elected officials are knowledgeable about infrastructure issues that cut across city, county and, often, state boundaries, and have expertise in regional infrastructure financing, planning and development, and implementing new, emerging technologies and strategies to determine appropriate infrastructure investments.
 - **Include local governments and local elected officials as a partner in the federal process.** Local governments across the country are committed to creating safer, healthier and more environmentally friendly communities. Local governments own and operate the majority of our nation's infrastructure and the local elected officials are closest to the people, being accountable and responsive to the needs of their communities.



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- **REGIONAL INVOLVEMENT:** Regional planning organizations like ours are responsible for billions of dollars in infrastructure planning and programming each year; developing and implementing strategic investment plans; fostering regional cooperation and economic competitiveness; forging public and private partnerships; and, securing and managing funds from local, state, federal and private sources.
- **REGIONAL NEEDS:** Recently, our membership trade association, the National Association of Regional Councils (NARC), released *Regional Infrastructure Investment: Building Our Economies; Investing in Our Communities* report detailing, at minimum, \$23 billion in “ready-to-go” surface transportation and wastewater infrastructure investment needed on the regional and local level. Many of our regions, face severe underinvestment as needs outstrip our ability to fund critical infrastructure. All of urban and rural America are sitting on billions of dollars of unfunded, dormant infrastructure projects - many of which are critical to preserving, maintaining and making our system safer.
- **LOCAL CONSTITUENT EXAMPLE:** In our region alone, additional infrastructure investment is needed for: [INSERT PROJECT DETAILS]

Project Name

Project Type and Description

Cost Estimate

Number of Jobs Created

Anticipated Start Time if received funding (i.e. immediately, 3 months, 6 months)

- **PREPARING FOR THE FUTURE:** Infrastructure must continually be promoted at all levels of government to increase the understanding and support from voters, citizens, businesses and policymakers and assist in preparing for future efforts and challenges, many of which will be centered around reauthorizing the surface transportation bill, creating a water trust fund and dealing with the impacts of climate change – all infrastructure-related issues.
- Thank you for your consideration of our recommendations and your commitment to sustained and strategic public investments in infrastructure. We offer our support and assistance to you and your colleagues on these important and timely economic recovery efforts to stimulate jobs, reinvigorate local and national economies and possibly forestall deep problems within state and local governments.