

December 20, 2018 [View this email in your browser](#)



Registration for NARC's 2019 National Conference of Regions is now open! NARC's 2019 National Conference of Regions is Sunday, February 10 - Wednesday, February 13, 2019 at the Washington Court Hotel. **Register for the conference today** to take advantage of the early-bird rates, which are available now through January 4, 2019. **Hotel reservations* can be made now.** Our **draft agenda** is also available for view.

*Please note that there is a maximum of 3 reservations that can be made in any single name.

The conference will open with a mobile workshop at 1pm on Sunday, followed by an informal gathering at 5pm for anyone interested in joining the Annual Conference planning committee and the Opening Reception (onsite at the hotel) at 6pm. The Executive Directors Council will meet on Monday afternoon and the Board will meet on Tuesday afternoon, concluding by 5pm. The Board dinner will be Monday evening and details will be shared with the Board members as they are confirmed. The conference will conclude following our Wednesday morning session, expected to be held on the Hill once again. Exact times may change, but these can be used for planning/travel purposes.

CONGRESS BRIEF

The House and Senate are scheduled to be on recess for the rest of the year. This may be subject to change based on a possible partial government shutdown.

We have heard a lot this week about what to expect in early 2019 in transportation and infrastructure policy. Though reading the tea leaves is always a challenge, a few takeaways will guide our thinking over the coming months:

- There is real desire to do an infrastructure package early next year, though with varying intensity depending on who you are talking to. There is going to be a push in the House to find agreement on increased funding for the Highway Trust Fund (ie. a gas tax increase). If (a very big IF) that can be accomplished, it might be a once in a generation opportunity to increase funding for local projects. We have discussed in the past the long list of challenges that stand in the way of such an agreement, and all of those remain. This author remains more skeptical than not that we will see this accomplished in the next Congress. But putting all of that aside for a moment, the enormous impact of such an agreement means we must leave some place in our hearts for optimism that it could actually come to pass.
- Earmarks could very well be on their way back. The new Democratic majority will have the *ability* to earmark (remember, only Republican caucus rules outlaw it right now), but recognize that they need additional funding support to start using their authority.
- FAST Act reauthorization will be a topic of discussion early in 2019, separate from discussions over an infrastructure package. Expect hearings to start soon and Congressional action to pick up as soon as committee assignments are finalized in late January.

AV START Hits Dead End

The AV START Act has stalled in the Senate and appears to be dead. The bill may be revisited in 2019, Senate Commerce Chairman John Thune (R - SD) confirmed on Wednesday. According to the Senator, AV START may be included as a part of a government-funding bill in the new Congress. Some private sector representatives lamented the missed opportunity to enact legislation, but others are already refocusing their attention to US DOT as they figure out how to regulate testing and deployment of the technology.

ADMINISTRATION BRIEF

Request for Comment (RFC) on Vehicle-to-Everything (V2X) Communications

The U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) **announced** a request for comment (RFC) on the use and integration of vehicle to everything (V2X) communications into the nation's transportation system. This technology has the potential to improve safety outcomes and support autonomous vehicle technology. There are currently more than 70 active deployments of V2X technology around the country, some using 5.9Ghz. The Department is specifically seeking comments regarding current and future technology that could be used in tandem and to support connected vehicles deployment. Comments on the RFC should be received by January 17th.

FTA Announces Projects to Improve Transit Access

FTA announced awards to **20 organizations** around the country this week totaling \$16.6 million. The funds were provided through FTA's Pilot Program for Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) Planning. Each organization's award will support a comprehensive planning project with the goal to improve access to public transportation through transit ridership, multimodal connectivity, and mixed-use development.

Trump to Nominate Textron Executive to NTSB

The Trump administration announced this past week the nomination for Michael Graham to the National Transportation Safety Board. Currently, Graham acts as the director of flight operations safety, security and standardization at Textron Aviation. If confirmed he is expected to serve the remainder of a term that expires in 2020. Among **others nominees** who remain to be confirmed, Jennifer Homendy is up for a second term on the NTSB. Trump is expected to nominate her once again.

Transportation Planning and Conformity Requirements

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) released new documents providing guidance to address transportation conformity and how it may be implemented. This specifically addresses ozone attainment and maintenance in areas affected by the February 16, 2018 decision from the DC Circuit in *South Coast Air Quality Management District v. EPA*.

REGIONS BRIEF

Uber's Self-Driving Cars Return to Public Roads for the First Time Since Fatal Crash

Uber resumed testing of their self-driving cars, nine months after a deadly crash with one of their vehicles in Tempe, Arizona. Pennsylvania's Department of Transportation reauthorized Uber to restart its program with scaled back modifications. Only two cars will be in operation, though more will be added overtime. The vehicles function at a 25 mph speed limit with a safety driver at all times. The vehicles are not for commercial or public use, and there are no passengers involved.

Mayor Rahm Emanuel Pushes State Gas Tax Increase to Fund Major Transportation Bill

Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel, the Metropolitan Mayors Caucus, and Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning Executive Director, Joseph Szabo expressed support for a gas tax that would raise billions of dollars for transportation and infrastructure improvements. Illinois has not raised the gas tax in 30 years and CMAP's reports on the region's infrastructure point to \$56 billion in necessary funding. Mayor Emanuel proposed raising the gas tax by 20 to 30 cents per gallon, comparable to neighboring states. His proposal received little direct endorsement from incoming Democratic Governor J.B. Pritzker who campaigned on a statewide infrastructure plan.

2018 BUILD Grant Award Regional Highlights

As we wrote last week, the U.S. DOT recently awarded \$1.5 billion in BUILD grant awards. Here are the highlights of the awards that were received by regional organizations.

\$25 Million Grant to Finish Bella Vista Bypass

The Northwest Arkansas Regional Planning Commission received \$25 million in BUILD funds for the I-49 Missouri-Arkansas Connector, also known as the Bella Vista Bypass. This roadway is a 4.8-mile, four-lane interstate facility in southwest Missouri. This project will bypass US-71 and connect to Interstate 49 in Arkansas. The project has support from both the Missouri and Arkansas Departments of Transportation as it represents a high priority project for regional and economic connectivity.

Kern Council of Governments

Located around Bakersfield, California, Kern COG was awarded \$17.5 million to fund the Kern County California State Route 46 Widening Segment 4B project. This 5.3-mile state road will transition from two to four lanes in each direction. Additionally, funding will enable the installment of an 18-meter median, upgrading seven intersections to bring the road into ADA compliance, additional bike lanes and sidewalks, as well as one new bridge.

Des Moines Transload Facility Receives \$11.2 Million BUILD Grant

The Des Moines Metropolitan Planning Organization was awarded \$11.2 million for the construction of the Des Moines Transload facility. This project has been a long-term priority for regional partners given its expected ability to transfer raw goods more efficiently and cost-effectively. It will connect regional trucking networks and the national rail freight network. The Transload Facility is expected to be fully operational in 2019, which represents an accelerated timeline possible only through the contributions of the grant.

North I-25 Among Projects for \$47M in Grants Awarded to Colorado

The North Front Range metropolitan Planning Organization received \$20 million for improvements to North I-25 in Colorado. The I-25 Coalition has long considered this area Colorado's Main Street, originally projecting completion of this project decades into the future. The BUILD Grant will expedite this timeline with full completion by 2022.

SRTS/SIMPCO BUILD Grant Announcement

The Siouxland Interstate Metropolitan Planning Council (SIMPCO) and the Siouxland Regional Transit System (SRTS) were awarded \$7 million to design and construct a new joint use facility. This facility will house bus maintenance areas, indoor bus storage, driver training, and office space. The location is undetermined, but the organizations have considered proximity to the Iowa DOT. Construction is anticipated to begin in 2021.

Eastgate Joins Partners in Washington D.C. to Formally Receive BUILD Award

The Eastgate Regional Council of Governments accepted a BUILD Grant award for their SMART2 Network Project in Washington, DC. The US Department of Transportation awarded the project \$10.85 million. SMART2 Network Project promises to provide autonomous transit shuttles, transit waiting environments, pedestrian and bicycle facilities, green infrastructure such as permeable surfaces and LED lighting, streetscaping, and wayfinding to connect anchor educational and health institutions.

NOACA Receives \$9.6 million Federal Grant for Roadway Improvements in Rural Northeast Ohio

The Northeast Ohio Areawide Coordinating Agency received a \$9.6 million grant to fund safety and mobility improvements the Amish and non-Amish populations traveling across rural Geauga County. The goals of the project aim to eliminate conflicts between cars, trucks, pedestrians, and Amish buggies, which have specifically resulted in severe and fatal crashes. Representatives from the region touted the investment in multimodal transportation that will allow for roadway shoulder widening to accommodate buggies and improve signage.

Haslet Receives \$20M Federal Grant for Infrastructure Improvement

The North Central Texas Council of Governments received \$20 million for the Alliance Texas/Haslet Accessibility Improvement Project. This project will construct the Haslet Parkway, extend the Intermodal Parkway into a 4-lane highway, and widen the Avondale-Haslet Road into 4-lane thoroughfare. This project aims to improve regional mobility for residents and businesses, relieve congestion, and support growth in the local and nearby communities.

JOBS

[View full list of jobs!](#)

Accounts Payable Specialist

Posted: 12/14/2018

San Diego Association of Governments, San Diego, CA

Policy Planner

Posted: 12/14/2018

Southeast Michigan Council of Governments, Detroit, MI

Transportation Programs Manager

Posted: 12/14/2018

Oregon Cascades West Council of Governments, Albany, OR

Alternative Fuels Planner II

Posted: 12/13/2018

Indian Nations Council of Governments, Tulsa, OK

Deputy Director/Chief Planner

Posted: 12/13/2018

Tri-County Regional Planning Commission, Lansing, MI

OPPORTUNITIES

[View full list opportunities!](#)

2019 TRB Annual Meeting Resiliency Tabletop

January 13, 2019, Washington, DC, 9:00 AM – 12:00 PM ET

This exercise will assemble fifteen multi-disciplinary teams at the Annual Transportation Research Board (TRB) meeting in Washington, DC. Each team will have representatives in each of the following groups: economics and commerce, infrastructure, emergency management, government transportation entities (all levels), and government non-transportation entities. During the 4-hour exercise, each team will collectively complete a workbook to stimulate a recovery from a freight disruption that affects local communities, regional economies, and national supply chains.

Opportunity for U.S. EPA Technical Assistance: Travel Efficiency Emissions Assessment and Planning

Application Deadline: January 11, 2019

The Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Office of Transportation and Air Quality (OTAQ) is seeking to partner with state, tribal, regional, or local transportation and air quality agencies interested in assessing transportation sector emissions and exploring how they could be reduced through travel efficiency strategies. EPA will select agencies based on the letters of interest received by January 11, 2019 and may consider other factors (e.g., geographic diversity) as well as those described above.

Transportation Planning Excellence Awards

Nominations Due: February 1, 2019

The biennial Transportation Planning Excellence Awards (TPEA) sponsored by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and Federal Transportation Administration (FTA) is now accepting nominations. The TPEA Program recognizes outstanding initiatives across the country to develop, plan, and implement innovative transportation planning practices. Nominations must fall within five specific categories. For more information please visit their website.

CONTACT US

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