



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF REGIONAL COUNCILS

January 8, 2015

Transportation Thursdays

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2015 NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF REGIONS

FEBRUARY 8-10, 2015
WASHINGTON, DC

LEGISLATIVE BRIEF

Senator Boxer Announces Retirement: Senator Barbara Boxer (D-CA), Ranking Member on the Environment and Public Works Committee (EPW), has announced she will not run for reelection when her seat is up in 2016. This move has been long speculated, indicated in part by the fact that Senator Boxer has done no fundraising for her own campaign account in recent months. She was Chair of EPW in 2012 when the current transportation authorization – MAP-21 – was enacted. Click [HERE](#) for more on this story.

Senators Put Gas Tax Increase on the Table... In recent days, several Senate Republican leaders have indicated their belief that a gas tax should be on the table as Congress seeks to find new sources of funding for transportation. Senators Orrin Hatch (R-UT), Chair of Senate Finance; James Inhofe (R-OK), Chair of Senate EPW; and John Thune (R-SD), Chair of Senate Commerce, have all stated their feeling that gas tax should be part of the conversation. Though far short of blustering support of the idea, their feeling does represent a potential shift in Republican thinking, at least in the U.S. Senate. Also this week, Senator Richard Durbin (D-IL), Democratic Leader in the Senate, said that it is time to raise the gas tax.

...While the House Takes It Off: Rep. Bill Shuster (R-PA), Chair of the U.S. House of Representatives Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, ruled out a gas tax increase or vehicle-miles tax to pay for infrastructure spending. Both revenue options would be unworkable, Shuster said, suggesting that corporate repatriation or oil and gas exploration and production profits might be better solutions. Click [HERE](#) for the Associated Press story.

ADMINISTRATIVE BRIEF

FHWA Issues Climate Change and Extreme Weather Resilience Order: The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Order 5520, *Transportation System Preparedness and Resilience to Climate Change and Extreme Weather Events*, states that it is FHWA policy to integrate consideration of climate and extreme weather risks into its planning, operations, policies, and programs. This new Order formalizes FHWA's commitment to this issue, guides the agencies' implementation of relevant MAP-21 provisions and recent Executive Orders, and identifies how the agency intends to continue to lead the transportation industry in making the nation's highways more resilient. Click [HERE](#) to read the entire order.

CEQ Guidance on Greenhouse Gases and Climate Change: The Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) is publishing revised draft guidance on how the *National Environmental Policy Act* (NEPA) analysis and documentation should address greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and the impacts of climate change. Click [HERE](#) to read the draft guidance.

REGIONAL BRIEF

Freight Congestion: The American Transportation Research Institute (ATRI) recently released the findings of its *2014 Congestion Impact Analysis of Freight-Significant Highway Locations*. The research assesses the level of truck-oriented congestion at 250 locations on the national highway system, and is developed in conjunction with the FHWA-sponsored Freight Performance Measures (FPM) initiative. The locations detailed in this latest ATRI report represent the top 100 congested locations. Click [HERE](#) to see the complete list.

California High Speed Rail Breaks Ground: At a ceremony earlier this week, Governor Jerry Brown and others helped break ground on a high-speed rail line that will eventually run from Los Angeles to San Francisco. This first segment of the project will cover a 29-mile stretch between Madera and Fresno, where the groundbreaking ceremony was held. Click [HERE](#) for more about this groundbreaking.

OPPORTUNITY BRIEF

Click [HERE](#) to view the list of grants and events still open!

SURVEY: AASHTO Snapshot of Planning Practices

Responses due: January 20

This Snapshot will focus on **Incorporating Transportation Operations with Planning**. The American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) asks that you share your knowledge and experiences on this timely topic by completing a brief 15-minute survey. Relative to the recent Snapshot surveys, this one may require more collaboration with other divisions within your agency. We encourage you to reach out to your colleagues if they have more specific expertise on some of the questions, but please coordinate responses and submit only one survey for your agency. Click [HERE](#) to access the survey, and [HERE](#) to view previous snapshots and sign up for the project's email list.

WEBINAR: Climate/Weather Risk Tools – Learning from the Gulf Coast

January 22, 2:00–3:30 PM

Over the past five years, the U.S. Department of Transportation has been conducting a groundbreaking climate change vulnerability assessment pilot in Mobile, Alabama. Commonly known as Phase 2 of the Gulf Coast Study, this project's mission was to develop methods, resources, and tools that will assist transportation agencies with conducting climate change vulnerability assessments and evaluating facility-level adaptation options. NARC staff got a sneak preview of this new assessment tool, and it is definitely worth checking out. Click [HERE](#) to register.

WEBINAR: Proposed Rule on Bridge and Pavement Condition

January 22, 2:00-4:00 PM

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) will hold a free webinar to provide information on the Notice of Proposed Rulemaking regarding bridge and pavement condition. For more information on this NPRM, please see the related article. Click [HERE](#) to register.

WEBINAR: EDC-3's Regional Models of Cooperation

January 27, 1:00–2:30 PM

Issues like air pollution and traffic congestion do not stop at State Department of Transportation (State DOT) or Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) boundaries, but planning often does. Planning in jurisdictional silos can interfere with essential coordination of regional transportation planning solutions, which can lead to project delays, process inconsistencies, and reduced system reliability. An enhanced process for effective communication used by State DOTs, MPOs, and transit authorities can result in improved collaboration. Using regional models of cooperation requires thinking beyond traditional borders and brings together many entities to support common goals on transportation planning topics such as congestion management, safety, freight, livability and commerce. The presentation and discussion will be followed by a question and answer session through the chat pod and over the phone. Click [HERE](#) to register.

WEBINAR: National Performance Measures Research Data Set

February 5, 2015, 1:00 PM

FHWA's Office of Freight Management and Operations is hosting its next Quarterly Technical Assistance Webinar for the National Performance Measures Research Data Set (NPMRDS), which is the probe data that FHWA is using internally for passenger and freight analysis and making available to States and MPOs. At this webinar, FHWA and its contractors will provide an overview of the probe data set, demonstrate data applications, and respond to technical assistance questions. Click [HERE](#) to register, and [HERE](#) for more information on the data set.

CONFERENCE: NARC's 2015 National Conference of Regions

February 8-10, 2015 - Washington, DC

Registration is open for the National Conference of Regions. This conference is a forum for locally-elected officials and their Regional Councils to explore federal policy issues, and discuss NARC's legislative priorities for the 114th Congress. Click [HERE](#) for the draft agenda and conference webpage.