



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF REGIONAL COUNCILS

TRANSPORTATION THURSDAYS

A promotional banner for the National Conference of Regions. On the left is a photograph of the United States Capitol dome in Washington, D.C., with a blue and white color scheme. On the right, a grey background contains the following text:

**NATIONAL
CONFERENCE OF REGIONS**

FEBRUARY 11-14, 2018
WASHINGTON, D.C.

Registration is Open!

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

As of January 1, Erich Zimmermann has been promoted to NARC's deputy executive director. He retains his title as the Director of Transportation Programs, however, so will continue – along with the excellent work of other NARC employees – to bring you *Transportation Thursdays* every week.

CONGRESS BRIEF

Greetings from TRB!

Surely, many of the transportation nerds, wonks, and aficionados that read this newsletter have attended the annual meeting of the Transportation Research Board (TRB), part of the National Academy of Sciences. The TRB Annual Meeting, which concluded yesterday, brings together 14,000 transportation junkies each January for hundreds of committee meetings, presentations, symposia, and poster sessions. It is an opportunity to hear from colleagues, researchers, federal agencies, and other transportation-related organizations of all varieties.

This year's theme was *Transportation: Moving the Economy of the Future*. Unsurprisingly, two topics received outsized attention: automated vehicles and other transformative technologies and the administration's will they/won't they infrastructure package. And on both fronts, the conversation was insightful, but the conclusions were few. On both topics, uncertainty runs high, timing is murky, and the impact on local and regional officials and planners is unknown. And both could be tremendously beneficial or tremendously hurtful, depending on how they are deployed. So, in both cases, it remains crucial we pay careful attention to the details while keeping things in the proper perspective. While there is plenty of time to shape their eventual roll out, it is time to consider how to make them work best for us. Tom Bamonte from North Central Texas Council of Governments in Dallas said it well when he quipped, "Ask not what your community can do for automated vehicles." The takeaway being that we need to figure out how to make automated vehicles work best for our communities and regions, and then try to ensure they are deployed in a manner that achieves those ends. We need to do the same with the infrastructure package, to

ensure that such a package, should it become law, helps further the transportation agenda in a meaningful way.

Infrastructure Plan Promised Soon

Speaking of the administration's infrastructure plan, its release date has been pushed back yet again, and is now expected in the days surrounding the State of Union address – to be delivered on January 30 – **according to** Senate Environment and Public Works Committee Chairman John Barrasso (R-WY). Senator Barrasso and other committee members met with administration officials this week to discuss the permitting process and the proposal in general. The White House maintains that no date has been set.

Meanwhile, House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee Chairman Bill Shuster (R-PA) says that he plans to put his effort into passing an infrastructure package rather than running for reelection this year. This sentiment is encouraging and may help push a plan along. He also plans to focus on self-driving truck legislation.

Bipartisan Program Solvers Caucus: Building America's Infrastructure

The Congressional Problem Solvers Caucus – a bipartisan group of 48 House members – is committed to fostering cooperation to solve some of the nation's vexing problems. The eight members of its Infrastructure Working Group were tasked with finding consensus on policy solutions to improve infrastructure. Their recent report covers surface transportation, ports, water, energy, broadband, and aviation with a problem statement and solutions for each. The report calls for a gas tax increase even though many members of the caucus are against it. Other funding solutions include incentivizing public private partnerships and maintaining the tax-exempt status for municipal and private activity bonds.

Infrastructure Working Group Letter

NARC signed a letter last week with more than 100 associations and organizations urging congressional leadership to address our country's need for infrastructure investment. The letter prioritized several goals for an infrastructure package, including facilitating private investment, fixing the Highway Trust Fund, strengthening existing tools such as municipal bonds, and investing \$1 trillion over ten years.

How the New Tax Bill Will Cut Infrastructure Investment

Tax cuts from the *Tax Cuts and Jobs Act* (TCJA) will make infrastructure more expensive for states and local governments, according to analysis conducted by the Brookings Institution. The largest immediate impact will be the increase in costs of borrowing through municipal debt. The cut to the top marginal tax rates makes the write-off for investing in municipal bonds less lucrative, thereby requiring higher interest rates to attract capital. This means less money goes to improving infrastructure, and more to interest payments. The lower corporate tax rate will also have the same effect. Another negative impact cited by Brookings is limiting SALT deductions, which puts downward pressure on future increases in property tax rates, especially in cities that already have relatively high tax rates or robust housing markets. This could leave cities with less revenue to apply to future infrastructure investments. Brookings concludes that while these factors will decrease infrastructure investment in the short-term, these impacts can be countered by future policy.

ADMINISTRATION BRIEF

USDOT Data Pilot Projects

USDOT Under Secretary of Transportation for Policy Derek Kan **announced two new data pilot programs** at the Annual TRB meeting on Monday in Washington, D.C. One will work with Waze to use traffic crash data from their app to analyze the feasibility of relying on its crowdsourcing model for providing timely information on road conditions. The other will use data from GPS devices to analyze how speed interacts with other roadway conditions to affect the probability of accidents.

A reminder to **join us in Washington, February 11-14**, to hear USDOT Undersecretary for Policy Derek Kan outline the administration's priorities.

USDOT Automated Vehicle Requests for Public Comment and Guidance 3.0

As part of USDOT's efforts to provide policy and guidance on automated vehicles, the department has posted four notices for public comment to help identify barriers to innovation and shape their initiatives. Two of the notices are on bus automation technology and deployment in addition to a request for thoughts on regulations and policies that reduce development of automated vehicles in general. USDOT will use this to inform their Federal Automated Vehicle Policy (FAVP) 3.0, which is planned for release at the end of summer 2018.

Environmental Review MOU

Alex Herrgott, with the White House Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ), told Transportation Research Board meeting attendees this week that the administration hopes to bring seventeen federal agencies together on a memorandum of understanding (MOU) to shorten the environmental review process to just two years. The administration has focused on reducing permitting requirements and cutting regulations. Herrgott, associate director of infrastructure at CEQ, also said in his remarks that the way we currently fund infrastructure is unsustainable and that the idea of asking states and localities to increase the share they pay is based on discussions with governments, not lawmakers.

Trump Signs Executive Orders to Aid Rural Broadband Development

At the American Farm Bureau Federation's annual conference on Monday, President Trump announced he would sign two new executive orders to advance rural broadband. One streamlines the permitting for towers along federal rights-of-way and facilities and the other requires the U.S. Department of the Interior to devote a portion of assets under its jurisdiction for broadband. However, additional federal funding is not associated with these orders, which may lessen their impact.

BTS Releases Transportation Statistics Annual Report 2017

USDOT's Bureau of Transportation Statistics (BTS) recently released the 22nd edition of the congressionally mandated *Transportation Statistics Annual Report*. The report presents key transportation indicators and an overview of the transportation system. It also includes data and statistics on passenger travel, freight movement, transportation and the economy, system reliability, safety, energy use, and environmental impacts. In addition, the report focuses on closing data gaps and improving the ways in which transportation statistics are collected, compiled, analyzed, and published.

JOBS

[View full list of jobs!](#)

Animal Control Director

Cumberland Animal Control, Cumberland County, NC

Executive Director

Association of Central Oklahoma Governments, Oklahoma City, OK

Associate Policy Analyst

Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, Chicago, IL

OPPORTUNITIES

[View full list of grants and events!](#)

Freight Deliveries and the Last 50 Feet of the Supply Chain

January 17, 1:00 – 2:30 PM ET

The growth of e-commerce has dramatically increased the volume of commercial retail deliveries to non-commercial retail locations, and in some cases the lack of storage areas at these delivery locations create their own set of challenges. This final portion of the freight transportation supply chain, sometimes called the last 50 feet of the supply chain, is short in length but critical in impact for freight deliveries. Many researchers are studying freight delivery issues to understand how those deliveries can be improved and made more efficient while not negatively impacting other transportation system users. This webinar will discuss some the research conducted by the University of Washington's Urban Freight Lab and their coordination efforts with the City of Seattle and the U.S. Postal Service to improve the efficiency of freight deliveries, especially in

higher congestion urban locations.

Trails Transform America: Leveraging the Power of Connected Trail Infrastructure

January 17, 2:00 – 3:00 PM ET

Hear from business leaders and elected officials from all points on the political spectrum about the value that connected trail networks bring to their communities. Their stories demonstrate the transformative power of trails to promote public health, economic growth, transportation, and job creation.

Connected Vehicle Applications Being Developed by THEA Connected Vehicle Pilot

January 19, 12:30 – 2:00 PM ET

Two new connected vehicle applications are being developed as part of the Tampa Hillsborough Expressway Authority (THEA) Connected Vehicle Pilot. Representatives from THEA will share their experiences in designing the Wrong Way Entry and Pedestrian in Crosswalk applications. The webinar will also identify technical and other barriers that THEA faces and how they will be overcome and discuss testing and performance measurement of the apps.

"3I" Series Infrastructure Ideas & Innovations: Asset Inventory

January 22, 10:00 AM – 12:00 PM ET

The Bipartisan Policy Center is launching the BPC Infrastructure Lab and “3I” Series—Infrastructure Ideas and Innovations. This new effort is aimed at providing policymakers with fact-based evidence that can shape strategies for restoring America’s infrastructure. State and local governments across the country are struggling just to repair and maintain their infrastructure systems, let alone expand or upgrade these systems with the latest and greatest technologies. As such, the lab’s first event presents leading public-sector efforts to embed asset management concepts into municipal government practices. In the spotlight: The District of Columbia’s comprehensive asset inventory, which includes 96 percent of all assets owned, a tally of accrued deferred maintenance, and an action plan to improve the District’s infrastructure. The event will be webcast.

Electric Vehicle Corridor Planning in the Western U.S.

January 22, 2:00 – 3:30 PM ET

City and state governments across the country are working at a rapid pace to expand the number of EV charging points. In the Western U.S., coalitions of public agencies are working across state boundaries to create new “EV corridors” that link entire regions of the country. What are the barriers to EV corridor planning? How can public agencies build effective coalitions? What are the keys to successful EV corridors? Join this webinar which features leaders of Western State EV corridors to learn more.

Decision Support Tools

January 31, 2:00 – 3:00 PM ET

This webinar will review how two different agencies use decision support tools to support TAM efforts. The speakers will highlight using the TAM small provider template and developing customized decision support tools, among other topics. This webinar is part of a larger webinar series FTA is hosting in 2017-2018 to address important topics relating to TAM. TAM is an essential practice for providing safer, more reliable transit service nationwide while helping lower operating costs.

Considering Traffic-Related Air Pollution in Bicycle Route Planning

February 7, 1:00 – 2:00 PM ET

Local, regional, and state agencies across the nation are making efforts to increase bicycle infrastructure. The typical planning process for locating new bicycle infrastructure considers a multitude of factors, such as available right-of-way, vehicular traffic volumes, safety concerns, among others. However, exposure to traffic-related air pollution is rarely considered but should be. Bicyclists are directly exposed to vehicular exhaust, which has been proven to contribute to a wide range of health problems such as lung and heart diseases. New research from the University of California, Riverside, provides insight on how the inclusion of traffic-related air pollution can change the outcome of bicycle route planning. Join this upcoming webinar to learn more about findings from this research and implications for bicycle route planning as well as future directions for this work.

CONTACT US

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