



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF REGIONAL COUNCILS

TRANSPORTATION THURSDAYS



2017 NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF REGIONS

FEBRUARY 12-15
WASHINGTON, DC

REGISTER TODAY!

NARC and Autonomous Vehicles Opportunity

Monday, February 13th, 1:00 PM ET

NARC will hold an autonomous vehicles listening session at 1 PM ET on Monday during the National Conference of Regions in Washington, DC. We invite you to attend and share your concerns, experiences, and ideas regarding planning for autonomous vehicles. NARC will also use this session to launch a working group around the issue with future calls, conference sessions, research, and any other action items that can benefit members. If you are interested in joining this working group or speaking during the session next week, please contact Sarah Reed at sarah@narc.org. See you next week, and be on the lookout for future information on this new and exciting NARC working group.

CONGRESS BRIEF

GOP Senator Floats New Highway Funding Bill

Senator Deb Fischer (R-NE), chair of the Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee's surface transportation subcommittee, introduced a new idea to pay for highway and other transportation projects. Fischer's *Build USA Infrastructure Act*, unveiled this week, would temporarily divert freight cargo and passenger revenue from Customs and Border Patrol to the Highway Trust Fund. The result would be \$21.4 billion annually for five years into the HTF, but is temporary and restricted to use only on road projects. It remains unclear how President Trump and his team will proceed on infrastructure, and whether he plans to address the broader issue of long-term highway funding. The administration is expected to take the lead on an infrastructure package and work with GOP lawmakers to shape it.

More Funding Discourse on the Hill

President Trump's plan to use repatriation to pay for infrastructure gained a major proponent this week when House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee Chairman Bill Shuster (R-PA) expressed his support for the idea. At present, U.S. companies have an estimated \$2.6 trillion in

profits that were earned overseas and being held there. These profits aren't taxable in the U.S. until they return the income from abroad. To entice companies to return these profits, Trump and House Republicans are asking for lower tax rates on the profits. Support exists for applying this windfall to infrastructure and transportation projects, but there are lots of other ways Congress could choose to proceed, including to help offset the cost of broad-based tax reform.

The Senate Environment and Public Works Committee heard from rural transportation leaders yesterday that direct federal funding is necessary for their surface transportation needs. The officials echoed the skepticism of the Chairman, John Barrasso (R-WY), about relying on public-private partnerships and the lack of population in rural areas to draw private investment. The Wyoming Transportation Director suggested that the best solution for rural areas is to distribute new money through formulas in the FAST Act to ensure that rural states are not passed over.

ADMINISTRATION BRIEF

Trump Administration Budget Outlook

As with the last three presidents, a delay until April or May is expected in the release of President Trump's budget. The president is required to submit a budget to Congress the first Monday in February, but former President Obama released his first full budget in early May and former President Bill Clinton submitted his in early April. Some experts, however, believe the administration will forgo submitting a budget outline in late February. Trump is still awaiting confirmation of the director of the Office of Management and Budget. White House officials are reportedly working on an executive order related to the budget submission, but few details are available.

DOT Inspector General Outlines Management Challenges Facing Department

At a hearing scheduled by the Senate Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee on Wednesday, DOT Inspector General Calvin L. Scovell III outlined the top management challenges facing the Department. Scovell identified the safe integration of emerging technologies such as driverless cars and Unmanned Aircraft Systems as well as the implementation of mandated and recommended safety improvements as major challenges. He also discussed the need for protection of DOT's financial and infrastructure investments, which includes enhancing the resilience of the National Airspace System and safeguarding our IT systems from increasingly complex cybersecurity threats. He closed by emphasizing their role in preventing fraud and their strong record of identifying weaknesses and recommending enhancements to DOT's internal controls.

REGIONS BRIEF

Autonomous Vehicles Meet Human Drivers: Traffic Safety Issues for States

A new report from the Governors Highway Safety Association (GHSA) is advising states to require automakers to submit applications for testing autonomous vehicles. The report was prepared for state DOTs, DMVs, and State Highway Safety Offices (SHSOs) and details how they can become engaged and prepare for autonomous vehicles. GHSA predicts that the final stages for testing fully autonomous vehicles will take place over the next five years and that states may want to set testing parameters to protect public safety. The report also urges states to become more informed before rushing to put out regulations and that they should work with companies that are developing the technology and join working groups and task forces to stay informed.

Identifying a Fiscally Responsible Approach to Funding Infrastructure

The Hamilton Project hosted an event this week on infrastructure investment with a panel of economics and tax scholars. Former U.S. Treasury Secretary Robert Rubin and Democratic Whip Steny Hoyer (D-MD) opened the event with the familiar call for more funding for infrastructure and a bipartisan solution. The panel discussed a variety of hot topic solutions such as public-private partnerships and repatriation and emphasized how important project selection is when dealing with low funding levels. The experts all agreed that there is no one solution and discussed the advantages and disadvantages including the small role an infrastructure bank could have. In conjunction with the event, The Hamilton Project released a new paper titled *If You Build It: A Guide to the Economics of Infrastructure Investment*.

JOBS

View full list of jobs!

Director, Sustainable Solutions and Transportation Alternatives

Miami Valley Regional Planning Commission, Dayton, OH

Alamo Local Authority (ALA) Program Analyst

Alamo Area Council of Governments, San Antonio, TX

Executive Director

Pikes Peak Area Council of Governments, Colorado Springs, CO

OPPORTUNITIES

View full list of grants and events!

Intermodal Freight Connectors – Issues and Needs

February 15, 1:00 – 2:30 PM ET

Intermodal connectors are key components of the U.S. roadway network, and are critical for enabling freight shipments handled by major non-highway based freight facilities (i.e. intermodal rail yards, marine ports, large commercial airports, etc.) to be transferred to or from trucks. These connectors are critical in enhancing the efficiency of the first and last mile truck shipments to or from intermodal freight facilities. However, intermodal connectors often do not receive the funding needed to maintain or improve their physical condition, or in some cases enhance their connectivity between intermodal freight facilities and the rest of the U.S. roadway network. This webinar will feature a discussion about a nearly completed national-level freight intermodal connector study, and regional coordination efforts between public sector agencies and intermodal facility owners to monitor and address intermodal connector needs.

Fostering Innovation in Pedestrian and Bicycle Transportation Pooled Fund Study

Call for participants ends May 31

Transportation agencies across the country are seeking ways to improve pedestrian and bicyclist safety and mobility. However, existing research programs that advance innovation, such as the National Cooperative Highway Research Program, cannot meet the growing needs for pedestrian and bicyclist research. This Transportation Pooled Fund (TPF) study will supplement existing research venues and fill an important missing gap by emphasizing short turnaround practical research on issues immediately relevant to practitioners. It will address national goals and priorities identified through input from local, state, and national partners in FHWA's *Strategic Agenda for Pedestrian and Bicycle Transportation*. The pooled fund will provide a mechanism for federal, state, regional, and local transportation agencies; academic institutions; foundations; private firms; and other stakeholders to collaboratively fund and implement pedestrian and bicycle research.

Program Available! 2017 National Conference of Regions

February 12-15 – Washington Court Hotel, 525 New Jersey Ave NW Washington, DC

The National Conference of Regions is NARC's forum to determine key policy issues and a legislative agenda for the year ahead, targeting topics central to our members' missions and their local elected officials' focus. Additional information will be available soon. Capitol Hill Day is the final day of the conference, February 15, 2017.

CONTACT US