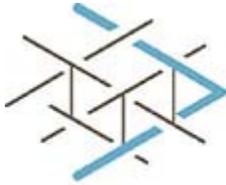


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NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF REGIONAL COUNCILS

February 20, 2014

Transportation Thursdays

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[ADMINISTRATIVE BRIEF](#) [LEGISLATIVE BRIEF](#)
[REGIONAL BRIEF](#) [OPPORTUNITY BRIEF](#)

NARC Hosting Another Reauthorization Conversation: NARC held a meeting with House Transportation & Infrastructure (T&I) staff this week to discuss general principles and specific changes we'd like to see incorporated in the next authorization. House staff gave us specific areas to expand upon for another meeting and your additional insight will be incorporated. Please register for the webinar [HERE](#). After registering, you'll receive a description of the issues up for discussion.

ADMINISTRATIVE BRIEF

Update on the Upcoming Performance Management and Transit Representation Rules: Based on information gathered today from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and Federal Transit Administration (FTA), the release of the first rulemakings regarding performance are quickly approaching. If the timeline holds, we'll see the safety performance measure and the highway safety improvement program (HSIP) rule by the end of the month; the statewide and metropolitan planning rule will follow a few weeks later. There is likely to be an opportunity to learn about the safety rules on March 11, and about the planning rule toward the end of March.

After that, the pavement, bridge, and asset management plan rules are expected by the end of May; the congestion and system performance

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rule by July 1. The agencies are also working on a roles and responsibilities assessment, including how they expect work to change for MPOs as they implement the new rules. They hope to have this by the end of Summer or early Fall. Expect more detail on this soon.

In addition, the rule regarding transit representation on transportation management area (TMA) boards is expected in the next three weeks.

Final Rule on Categorical Exclusions in Place: On January 13, FTA and FHWA published a joint final rule in the Federal Register creating two new categorical exclusions (CE) for the agencies, pursuant to MAP-21. The rule added two new categorical exclusions for actions within the existing operational right-of-way and actions with limited Federal funding (projects with less than \$5 million of federal funds or projects less than \$30 million). These changes are effective as of February 12. For more information including the final rule text and explanatory webinar, go **[HERE](#)**.

LEGISLATIVE BRIEF

CRS Report Highlights Problems with Highway Trust Fund: A recent report by the Congressional Research Service (CRS), *The Federal Excise Tax on Motor Fuels and the Highway Trust Fund: Current Law and Legislative History*, explores the history and recent struggles of the Highway Trust Fund (HTF) and the failure of fuel taxes to cover Congressional spending on surface transportation. The paper explores the recent proposal by Rep. Earl Blumenauer (D-OR) to increase and index the gas taxes, as well as proposals to devolve the program to the states and slash the federal tax rates. One interesting footnote in the report indicates that the federal tax would have to be approximately twelve cents more than the current \$0.184, to capture the loss of purchasing power that has occurred since the rate was last increased in 1993. This report is a nice – if depressing – dovetail, with the recent release from the Congressional Budget Office that concludes Congress would need to raise an additional \$100 billion to pass a 6-year authorization bill at current funding levels. The full report is available **[HERE](#)**.

REGIONAL BRIEF

2014 National Conference of Regions (NCR) - Transportation Open

Session and Committee Meeting: Brief Overview: This was the first transportation open session at the NCR. Bryna Helfer, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Public Engagement at U.S. DOT, joined us to talk about the long-awaited performance measurement and management rules, and indicated the first set of measures (safety) should be released in the Spring and followed shortly by planning measures. Helfer talked about the importance of ladders of opportunity as they relate to transportation; access to transportation; and transportation as a connector – not a divider – for communities. She stressed the importance of producing and accessing better data since metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs) are data driven. The importance of connected freight was also discussed. Freight needs to be a connected, comprehensive intermodal system utilizing highways, shipping, and rail.

Following the federal perspective was an update from our local partners, the National League of Cities (NLC) and the National Association of Counties (NACo). Leslie Wollack from NLC stressed the need to keep the MPO threshold at 50,000 in the next authorization. Other issues she discussed included the importance of tax exempt municipal bonds, and the importance of flexibility, and local control of transportation funds.

Jessica Monahan, Associate Legislative Director from NACo, highlighted the problems of short-term authorizations, indicating their preference for a bill of at least five years in duration. Other issues she discussed included lack of bridge funding – including the “doughnut hole” created by changes to the nation’s bridge program; high risk rural roads; and obstacles facing rural local agencies.

NCR Panel Discussion: Transportation Policy Roundtable – The Next Transportation Reauthorization: NARC held a surface transportation reauthorization policy roundtable discussion focused on learning about the policy priorities of our association partners. Rich Perrin, current President of the Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations and Executive Director of the Genesee Transportation Council, kicked off the conversation by discussing the need to increase the federal gas tax; the importance of cross border and other freight movement; and emphasized the need for “selling” the investment of the nation’s transportation system by highlighting the resulting benefits.

Janet Oakley from American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials primarily talked about the highway trust fund. She reiterated the fact that the highway trust fund may run out of money

before the current bill ends and that money does not come fast enough with just an increase in the gas tax. Oakley believes that funding must be dealt with first, because a lack of funding can result in slower reimbursements which can make the problem worse.

Jessica Monahan from NACo believes there's a divide between the chambers when it comes to reauthorization: the U.S. House wants to concentrate on additional policy reforms whereas the U.S. Senate wants to concentrate on funding because they believe the last bill was primarily a policy bill. Monahan again drove home the point that the highway trust fund must be fixed first and that the next bill must be a long term bill that defends what we already have and asks for more.

Kevin McCarty from U.S. Conference of Mayors led a spirited discussion about the importance of local control of resources and the need for all of the locally-focused groups to stick together in our approach to reauthorization, to avoid a situation where more of the control over transportation decisions ends up with the states.

Leslie Wollack from NLC reminded everyone that local elected officials are the most trusted, and that we need to use that statistic when making the case for more local control over money and projects.

Susan Howard from National Association of Development Organizations (NADO) talked about how a regional approach to planning makes the most sense, and that small MPOs must have a say and be represented. States have too much power in terms of project selection and there doesn't seem to be any local input. NADO is focused on cooperation between state and local partners as well as regional collaboration.

OPPORTUNITY BRIEF

New! SURVEY: America Walks Helps Identify Walking Efforts in the US: Help America Walks understand and document the national network of community walking advocates and enthusiasts working to make America a great place to walk. The purpose of this survey is to begin cataloging the type and amount of local walking advocacy and programming activity being implemented in your community by your organization. Topics of interest include: walking programs and the developments of environments that make walking safe, routine, and enjoyable. Click [HERE](#) to take the survey.

SURVEY: Brenda Bustillos: Doctoral student, The University of

Arizona: Brenda is recruiting transportation professionals with experience in the transportation planning and modeling community who are willing to complete a short online survey that takes approximately 20 minutes. The collected data from this survey will support her dissertation research at the University of Arizona. The goal of the survey is to provide information to better understand this community by getting to know individual's social networks. If you have any questions or need clarity, contact Brenda at bibustil@email.arizona.edu. Click [HERE](#) to take the survey and view more information.

WEBINAR: America Walks: Using Crosswalk Laws as a Framework for Pedestrian Safety

February 25, 2:00 PM EST

When someone gets hurt or the police are urged to "do something," it is the traffic law that governs what can be done. Pedestrian law advocate and lawyer Ray Thomas (Portland, OR) will present an overview of the nation's crosswalk laws. Ray's presentation will give attendees a better understanding of the legal framework that supports each pedestrian's rights. Click [HERE](#) to register.

WEBINAR: Transportation and Livability, What's that Really Mean for Rural Transportation Systems?

February 28, 12:00 PM EST

This webinar is designed to challenge transportation researchers and policy makers to consider the nature and severity of problems in the rural transportation system, where livability means something quite different than simply travel choices and "destinations close to home." Dr. Aultman-Hall will review the rise of livability as a concept in federal transportation policy between 2009 and 2012 and discuss lessons learned, specifically barriers that must be overcome, for both non-metropolitan and rural areas. Click [HERE](#) to register. Click [HERE](#) for additional information.

CONFERENCE: Freight in the Southeast

March 3-6; Tampa, FL

The Institute for Trade and Transportation Studies, a regionally-focused organization that works on trade and transportation issues in the southeast, is holding its annual trade conference and might be of interest to the area's metropolitan planning organizations and other transportation planners. On the first night, there will be a working dinner

with discussion on “Integrating local and statewide freight planning efforts.” For more information, click [HERE](#) or contact Bruce Lambert at bruce@ittsresearch.org.

New! WEBINAR: Best Practices for Collaborating on Data Sharing and Data Analytics

March 6, 1:00 PM EST

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) would like you to join them for the next *Let's Talk Performance*. The ability to collect, store, access, and analyze data to use for transportation performance management decision making is an area of great concern for several of FHWA partners. This webinar will focus on sharing best practices being implemented in Texas, California, and Maryland concerning data collection, storage, and access, while also analyzing concerns related to the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP-21) performance provisions. Click [HERE](#) to register.

GRANT: U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) Announces Availability of \$24.9 Million to Put More Zero-Emission Buses into Service Across America

Deadline: March 10

The U.S. DOT's Federal Transit Administration announced the availability of \$24.9 million through its brand new Low or No Emission Vehicle Deployment Program that will put a new generation of advanced, non-polluting transit buses on the road in communities nationwide. The funds are intended to encourage more widespread adoption of reliable “green energy” buses into transit fleets. Click [HERE](#) for the announcement, and [HERE](#) for related information.

WEBINAR: Eno Center's Public Private Partnership Training Course

Application Deadline: February 26

Webinar: March 10 – April 4

The Eno Center for Transportation has created an interactive online public-private-partnership (P3) course. This 40-hour, four-week course will prepare mid- and senior-level managers to navigate the capital expansion and rehabilitation process in the P3 context. This course is conducted online, but features interactivity with other students and course mentors. Each week has a distinct lesson plan and assignments, although most course activities are flexible or available on-demand. The course fee is \$3,000. Click [HERE](#) to register. Click [HERE](#) for additional information.

New! WEBINAR: The Challenge of Transportation Planning for Resilience

March 11, 11:30 AM EST

Join William Lyons, principal technical advisor in transportation planning at Volpe, for his talk on Transportation System Resilience Extreme Weather and Climate Change. Lyons leads Volpe support for the FHWA and Federal Transit Administration (FTA) on regulatory reviews of transportation planning by states and metropolitan areas. The projects involve multi-disciplinary teams and significant collaboration with transportation planning and operating agencies at federal, state, regional, and local levels. Click [HERE](#) to register.

Update! GRANT: Health Impact Assessment (HIA) Funding Opportunity

Proposal Deadline: *April 2*

The Health Impact Project, a collaboration of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and The Pew Charitable Trusts, has launched a call for proposals. HIA help to identify and address likely benefits and risks of a decision made in a field outside of the health sector. Eligible organizations include nonprofits, state, local and tribal agencies, and educational institutions. Click [HERE](#) to read the proposal letter and [HERE](#) for application details.

New! CONFERENCE: Ohio Conference on Freight

September 18-19, Hyatt Regency Columbus, OH

This conference addresses the reality that economic growth will increasingly depend upon or be at the mercy of our freight infrastructure. Key goals of the conference include: building professional capacity in all aspects of freight transport by disseminating best practices in supply chain and logistics; strengthening the ability of the public and private sectors to effectively plan, build, and maintain an efficient transportation network; examining and informing state and federal policies that support freight related economic development. Also, professional engineers can claim professional development hours [PDH]. For more information contact Christine Drennen, Conference Director (419.241.9155 ext. 119 or drennen@tmacog.org) or visit www.ohiofreight.org for more info.

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