

February 25, 2016

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NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF REGIONAL COUNCILS

TRANSPORTATION THURSDAYS

CONGRESS BRIEF

Feds Push Congress to Spend \$98B on Transportation this Year

Transportation Secretary Anthony Foxx **urged Congress this week** to approve President Obama's \$98 billion budget for transportation projects. This budget would add approximately \$40 billion to current funding levels in the FAST Act and include the *21st Century Clean Transportation Plan*, directing money to regions rather than states.

Passenger Rail: Opportunities and Challenges for the National Network

This week, the Senate Surface Transportation and Merchant Marine Infrastructure, Safety, and Security Subcommittee held a hearing on passenger rail in the U.S. The panel consisted of four witnesses representing various rail corridors, including Amtrak's CEO and President Joseph Boardman. The experts focused on promoting rail throughout the nation with a particular interest in restoring the Gulf Coast route following Hurricane Katrina. They emphasized the value of rail as cities' lose bus and airline service and as a primary form of travel for seniors. Boardman also spoke to the importance of passenger rail as the connector between smaller towns, Amtrak's Gateway Project, and the agency's fiscal challenges.

Up in the Air

A major issue in the upcoming Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) reauthorization will be the regulation of drones. As part of the integration of drones into the system, Congress is looking to provide a more detailed framework for drones in the FAA authorization. Additionally, FAA will be releasing small-drone regulations this year. Still, there are many unanswered questions regarding public safety and personal rights in the use of drones. Drones are especially useful for inspection of infrastructure, monitoring crops, and transporting medical supplies, but they are also used for recreation and potentially package delivery. This crossover of personal and commercial use creates a difficult regulation task. A framework of regulations will need to be developed intelligently and quickly to integrate unmanned aircrafts into the system starting with FAA's reauthorization.

ADMINISTRATION BRIEF

TIGER Discretionary Grants

This week, Secretary Foxx announced the eighth round of the TIGER discretionary grant program, worth \$500 million. These grants fund surface transportation projects on a competitive basis that have a significant impact on the nation, metro area, or region. The deadline to apply for this round of TIGER grants is April 29, 2016.

CBO: Approaches to Making Federal Highway Spending More Productive

The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) released a report about making federal spending on highways more productive. It suggests that highway spending is not reflective of how roads are used and valued and provides three approaches to Congress on how to make spending more productive. CBO suggests charging drivers directly for road usage, using benefit cost analysis for allocating funds to states, or linking spending to performance measures by awarding or penalizing

states that do not meet standards. The report does not select one option but explores all of them and presents the pros and cons of each.

Pathways to Opportunity: Housing, Transportation, and Social Mobility

In an event at the Brookings Institution, Secretary Foxx and U.S. Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Secretary Julian Castro participated in a discussion on how their agencies are working together. They spoke about HUD's Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing Rule and USDOT's Ladders of Opportunity as examples of how they are working to alleviate poverty and provide opportunity in communities. Foxx also spoke on the importance of MPOs and COGs, for providing ground-up solutions and being leaders on issues that reach across borders.

REGIONS BRIEF

A New Idea on Regional Approaches in Transportation Budget

One program of interest in President Obama's FY2017 budget is the 21st Century Regions Grant Program. Though it won't become law, it is a new idea regarding the distribution of surface transportation program funding. The Administration proposes \$1 billion next year – growing to almost \$9 billion in coming years – for a competitive program that would distribute funds directly to metropolitan governments.

JOBS

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Transportation Planner

Cowlitz-Wahkiakum Council of Governments, Kelso, WA

Principal Planner – Project Manager

North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority, Newark, NJ

OPPORTUNITIES

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

2016 USDOT Freight Summit

February 29, 12:30 – 5:30 PM ET

Improving the nation's freight network is a key priority for USDOT. During the 2016 Freight Summit, participants will have an opportunity to share insights on the future of freight movement in America, including freight provisions in the FAST Act and the draft *National Freight Strategic Plan*. You can attend this event in person or virtually.

TREDIS 5: Freight Planning and Economic Development

March 1, 1:00 – 2:00 PM ET

This webinar will focus on the freight capabilities enabled in the latest TREDIS 5 user interface. The vFreight and Transearch data sets enable the analysis of commodity flows, freight requirements, and the economic consequences of freight policies and infrastructure investments.

2016 TIGER Grant Webinar Series

March 1, 1:00 – 3:00 PM ET, How to Compete for TIGER Discretionary Grants - All Applicants

March 2, 1:00 – 3:00 PM ET, Preparing a Benefit Cost Analysis (BCA)

For the 2016 TIGER round, USDOT is offering a series of topical webinars that delve into various aspects of the TIGER application process. These webinars are a great resource for anyone preparing a TIGER application or considering it. These webinars come from the funding source and share the expertise of USDOT to prospective applicants.

2016 Alliance for Biking & Walking Benchmarking Report Release

March 2, 2:00 – 3:00 PM ET

We know walking and biking are becoming increasingly popular in the U.S., but where and how

quickly? Since 2003, the Alliance for Biking & Walking has been tracking key data about active transportation through its Benchmarking Project. Every two years, the project team publishes an updated report with the most recent data available, providing the most comprehensive snapshot of walking and biking in the U.S. Join the Alliance as they release the *2016 Benchmarking Report* and walk you through data highlights and how your organization can use the report to advance walking and biking advocacy in your community.

Design and Estimation of GreenSTEP and RSPM

March 10, 2:00 – 4:00 PM ET

This is the second of three webinars on the GreenSTEP and RSPM strategic planning models. GreenSTEP is an open-source model that was developed at the Oregon DOT to enable state planners and policy makers to analyze the effects of alternative strategies for reducing greenhouse gas emissions from the transportation sector. The Regional Strategic Planning Model (RSPM) was developed from GreenSTEP to model metropolitan areas. These models operate in the middle ground between advanced travel demand models and simpler sketch planning tools. These models also address a number of factors that are not typically considered by advanced travel demand models such as vehicle powertrains, fuel types, carsharing, and household travel budgets. This webinar will focus on the overall process used to develop parts of the models and will cover how selected sub-models were developed in more depth.

TRB Straight to Recording for All: Breaking Down Barriers – Funding and Finance Issues and Innovations in Public Transportation

Watch TRB recorded presentations that examine new approaches to funding and financing transit projects, including issues confronting sponsors of public transportation projects and programs and how transit agencies have addressed these issues. Topics include the use of passenger revenue-based *Transportation Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act* (TIFIA) loans for transit capital projects, a review of how transit project sponsors are partnering with the private sector, and case studies of the funding and finance tools project sponsors are using.

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