



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF REGIONAL COUNCILS

TRANSPORTATION THURSDAYS

CONGRESS BRIEF

Will They or Won't They?

Despite the administration's optimism that Congress can vote on an infrastructure package before the election in November, there are hints that indicate otherwise. House Speaker Paul Ryan (R-WI), a key figure in determining whether we see legislation this year, delivered a recent speech in which he indicated that Congress is more likely to pass an "infrastructure package" as a series of smaller bills, including the must-pass FAA Reauthorization and *Water Resources Development Act* (WRDA). This is not a surprising revelation. There were early indications signaling that Congress could go this way (e.g. calling a series of work otherwise scheduled an infrastructure package), but this was the first time this strategy was publicly acknowledged by congressional leadership.

House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee Chairman Bill Shuster (R-PA), who has recently pushed hard for an infrastructure package and an increase in the federal gas tax, acknowledges that a package that garners enough bipartisan support to secure passage is unlikely prior to the election. He believes something can happen in the "lame duck" period after the election, but there are reasons to doubt this outcome as well. Shuster also described the administration's proposal to pay for a broader infrastructure package with cuts in funding for transit, rail, and TIGER grants as "smoke and mirrors."

Chairman John Thune (R-SD) sent a similar message concerning the administration's infrastructure proposal during a Senate Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee hearing yesterday attended by five cabinet secretaries (Transportation, Commerce, Labor, Agriculture, and Energy). Thune stressed the overwhelming need for a "significant source of revenue" to support their push for a \$200 billion investment, a sentiment echoed by several committee senators. The administration would not take a side on the pay-for question, placing everything on the table but not pushing for a specific solution.

Letter Outlines Concerns with AV Start Act

A letter from five Democratic senators outlines concerns regarding automated vehicle legislation, which has passed out of committee and awaits action by the full Senate. The holds placed on the legislation by Dianne Feinstein (D-CA), Richard Blumenthal (D-CT), and Ed Markey (D-MA) were previously known, but the letter revealed that Senators Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY) and Tom Udall (D-NM) also have concerns. The concerns expressed in the letter focus primarily on safety and preemption of state and local authority to regulate automated vehicles.

ADMINISTRATION BRIEF

Fight Coming Over Clean Air Regulations

The Trump administration signaled this week that it could end California's long-standing authority to set its own limits on air pollution, largely over a disagreement regarding fuel efficiency standards. The administration faces an April 1 deadline to decide if more stringent fuel efficiency standards for cars and light trucks, established by the Obama administration, are attainable or need to be reworked. The federal government is seeking to leverage the waiver granted by Congress to California in 1970 that allows the state to set pollution standards that are more stringent than the federal *Clean Air Act* requires, using it as a wedge to convince California

to agree to reductions in fuel efficiency standards. Automobile manufacturers are concerned that separate standards at the federal and California level – the state where more cars are sold than any other – would be overly burdensome.

REGIONS BRIEF

Cost and Timetable of California High-Speed Rail Shifts Again

According to a newly-released business plan, the cost of California's high-speed train between San Francisco and Los Angeles has increased by 20 percent – from \$64 billion to \$77 billion – and will open in 2033, four years later than anticipated. The connection from San Francisco to the Central Valley is projected to open in 2029, also four years later than initial projections.

JOBS

[View full list of jobs!](#)

OPPORTUNITIES

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

A Winning Public Involvement Approach for LRTPs

March 20, 2:00 – 3:00 PM ET

How can you captivate the public to collect input for your long-range transportation plan? Make it visual. Gamify it. Map it. Join the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments for an insider view of their brilliant approach to public outreach. Learn how they identified local issues with map markers, educated citizens with visual preference surveys, and uncovered local priorities with online rankings. They engaged over 4,000 residents! The result? A *2045 Regional Transportation Plan* that reflects local values.

The Promise of Smart Transportation Networks

March 23 10:00 – 11:30 AM ET

The Center for Technology Innovation at Brookings will hold a forum on smart transportation and discuss a white paper, *Smart Transportation in China and the United States*. How many lives could be saved through the use of autonomous vehicles? How many billions of dollars of GDP generated? Experts will examine which technological developments have the potential to turn current systems into smart transportation networks, with an emphasis on China and the U.S. They will also discuss the ways in which public opinion and policy frameworks differ between these countries and what unique challenges are faced in deploying smart transportation networks.

Knowledge Management Resource to Support Strategic Workforce Development for Transit Agencies

March 27, 2:00 – 3:30 PM ET

TCRP Report 194: Knowledge Management Resource to Support Strategic Workforce Development for Transit Agencies explores the importance of knowledge management (KM), which is an organization's process for collecting, storing, and sharing organizational information and knowledge, and provides guidance on implementing KM strategies in transit agencies. The presenters will discuss action plans for developing particular aspects of KM, analysis of KM strategies at several transit agencies, and a catalog of KM technology tools and resources, which are all available in the report.

Gaining Insights from Freight Data

March 27, 11:00 AM – 12:30 PM ET

This webinar will focus on U.S. and European organization efforts to gain deeper insights from freight data, with a focus on how freight data has supported the development of freight plans, stakeholder engagement, and infrastructure investments. Insights will be shared by Tim Strow, senior transportation project manager at the Maricopa Association of Governments, and Tom Cherett, professor at the University of Southampton.

TAM Webinar Series: Major Capital Replacements

March 28, 2:00 – 3:00 PM ET

FTA will host a webinar to review how two different agencies handle major capital replacements in their TAM planning processes. The webinar will feature presentations from Cobb Community

Transit and Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority. The webinar will highlight, among other topics, incorporating new assets and major capital replacements into TAM plans and inventories.

CONTACT US

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