



## CONGRESS BRIEF

### Bill to Raise the Gas Tax Introduced in the House

Last week, Earl Blumenauer (D-OR) introduced legislation to increase the federal gas tax. The *Raise And Index to Sustainably and Efficiently Invest In Transportation (RAISE IT) Act*, H.R. 1458, has twenty-two Democratic cosponsors and would index the federal gas and diesel taxes to inflation and phase in a 15-cent per gallon increase over three years. It also calls on Congress to replace the gas tax with a better funding source within ten years.

### Protect Municipal Bonds as Key Tool for Local Infrastructure Investment

On March 8, **156 Members of Congress called on the leadership of the House Ways and Means Committee** to protect the tax exemption for municipal bonds as the committee considers tax reform and infrastructure finance. Noting that municipal bonds financed nearly two-thirds of core infrastructure investments in the U.S., the letter details some of the programs that bonds fund: roads, schools, housing, water system, courthouses, hospitals and clinics, airports, and utilities. Although not on the agenda for tax reform specifically, advocates are concerned that the tax exemption for municipal bonds is a potential target as legislators look for ways to raise revenue. NARC is a member of the Public Finance Network supporting continued tax exemption.

## ADMINISTRATION BRIEF

### Skinny Budget Released Today

The Trump administration released its budget blueprint today, which offsets increases for military spending, construction of a border wall, and so-called school choice with significant cuts to the non-military discretionary budget. Transportation items are below, and you can find the complete NARC analysis [HERE](#).

### Department of Transportation

FY2018 proposed funding level: \$16.2B (-\$2.6 billion, 13% decrease)

- Corporatizes the Air Traffic Control (ATC) system
- Eliminates New Starts transit funding for capital projects if a full funding grant agreement is not already in place
- Reduces federal support for Amtrak; eliminates funding for long-distance routes, redirects savings to State-support routes and the Northeast Corridor
- Eliminates Essential Air Service (-\$175 million)
- Eliminates TIGER grant program (-\$499 million)

### **Trump Begins Review of Obama Emissions Standards for Cars**

The Trump administration has initiated a review process for Obama-era emission standards, mandating a fuel economy standard of 54.5 miles per gallon by 2025. Automakers opposed the standards, arguing that the goal is too expensive and difficult to reach. President Trump has promised that the new decision would grow jobs and help their bottom line. Supporters of the standard warn that any roll back of emissions requirements will increase pollution that contributes to climate change and public health issues.

## **REGIONS BRIEF**

### **DVRPC Transit Benefits Extended to Uber**

Participants in the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission's (DVRPC) RideECO commuter benefit program can now use their benefit debit cards to pay for uberPOOL rides. RideECO allows employers and commuters to save by putting pre-tax dollars towards fares on public transportation and vanpools. Currently, nearly 500 employers and 10,000 employees participate in the program. The inclusion of uberPOOL in the benefit program will open the program to new users and allow current users to extend the reach of their commute.

### **California Says Autonomous Cars Don't Need Human Drivers**

The California Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) released proposed regulations last Friday, dropping an earlier requirement that a human driver had to be present while testing autonomous vehicles. The DMV also reversed its stance on a previous rule that said a steering wheel and pedals must be present in the vehicle. Now, if companies wish to test vehicles without a steering wheel and pedals they must show approval from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. This relaxation of rules is good news for developers and the state who want to be leaders in this field.

### **INRIX Autonomous Vehicles Cities Study 2017**

INRIX has identified and ranked the top cities for highly autonomous vehicle (HAV) deployment based on current travel habits and has created a framework for analyzing cities based on their suitability. Topping the list are: New Orleans, Albuquerque, Tucson, Portland, and Omaha. The report also looks at several large cities and analyzes their preparedness, including: San Francisco, Austin, and New York City.

### **Survey Results Report: Transportation Professionals Regarding ROI for Passenger Rail**

A **report released** by the Urban Transportation Center at the University of Illinois at Chicago presents several key findings about greater investment in passenger rail. They interviewed sixty-six transportation professionals who were asked to rank five potential outcomes of greater investment and identify barriers to development, among other topic areas. Overwhelmingly respondents indicated that investment was needed at the national and regional levels and indicated financing as the biggest barrier for investment followed by political opposition and lack of citizen desire.

### **NARC's New Blog Platform: Regions Lead**

NARC's new blog platform, Regions Lead, is now available online. You can subscribe directly to Regions Lead on the **main page** of the site, make comments, and even **submit your own blogs** to share with NARC and other regions.

### **2017 NARC Awards**

NARC is accepting nominations for its 2017 Achievement and Leadership Awards, which will be presented at the Awards Gala Dinner during the 51st Annual Conference and Exhibition, June 4-7, in Monterey, CA. The awards provide an excellent opportunity for winners to promote their successes to a larger audience, as well as share best practices with their partners and peers. The nomination deadline is April 28th.

## **JOBS**

*[View full list of jobs!](#)*

### **Planner II**

West Florida Regional Planning Council, Pensacola, FL

### **RFQ No. 17-04: General Transportation Planning Consultants Services**

Broward Metropolitan Planning Organization, Fort Lauderdale, FL

### **Planning Principal**

Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, Chicago, IL

### **Regional Planner**

Madera County Transportation Commission, Madera, CA

### **Regional Transportation Planner**

Michiana Area Council of Governments, South Bend, IN

### **Public Outreach Planner**

South Jersey Transportation Planning Organization, Vineland, NJ

### **Assistant Planner/Engineer**

South Jersey Transportation Planning Organization, Vineland, NJ

## **OPPORTUNITIES**

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

### **Connected Trucks – Research and Implementation Initiatives**

March 22, 1:00 – 2:30 PM ET

In recent years there has been an increasing focus on connected and automated vehicles, both by public sector agencies such as FHWA and by private vehicle manufacturers and carriers. Many truck manufacturers and carriers – particularly large, long-haul, over-the-road truckload (TL) carriers – are interested in this emerging technology as a means to reduce their costs and increase their operational efficiency. In fact, many analysts believe the trucking industry will adopt connected trucks more quickly than the passenger automobile industry, due to the greater bottom line benefits derived from financial and operational efficiencies achieved by using connected vehicles. This webinar will feature a discussion about on-going, truck-focused, connected Vehicle-to-Infrastructure (V2I) and Vehicle-to-Vehicle (V2V) research initiatives being conducted by both the FHWA Turner Fairbank Highway Research Center and private companies.

### **TREDIS: Addressing Emerging Technologies Part 1 - Freight Modes**

March 30, 1:00 – 2:00 PM ET

Connected/autonomous vehicles, Hyperloop, and drones are a few of the new freight technologies on the rise. In this one-hour webinar, TREDIS will show you how to address emerging freight technologies in your TREDIS analyses and will focus on an example of how truck technologies might affect a state's economy. Join the first of a two-part series to learn how TREDIS determines the economic impact and benefit cost of emerging technologies on your transportation infrastructure investments. Part two in the series is scheduled for April 25th and will focus on passenger modes.

### **Exploring the Outdoors: Partners in Outdoor Spaces Webinar**

April 12, 2:00 PM - 3:00 PM ET

The outdoors offers beautiful places to walk and be physically active. How can we work with our friends and allies to make sure every person has the opportunity to enjoy the many benefits of being in nature? Join America Walks and some of their partners to learn about the tools, resources, and work being done to make sure every community member has safe, accessible, and enjoyable places to be physically active outside.

### **Save the date! 51st Annual Conference & Exhibition**

June 4-7 - Monterey, CA

Join NARC and the California Association of Councils of Governments for NARC's 51st Annual Conference and Exhibition, which focuses on promoting effective regional cooperation and solutions through interaction and education.

## CONTACT US

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