



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF REGIONAL COUNCILS

TRANSPORTATION THURSDAYS

CONGRESS BRIEF

Omnibus Details

The House passed a \$1.3 trillion omnibus this morning, just hours after revealing the bill text; the Senate is expected to do the same, but the exact timing of the vote is unclear. The Senate needs to pass the bill or a short extension before midnight tomorrow to avoid a partial government shutdown.

After days of waiting for bill text, several items were thought to be holding up the process. One of the most publicized was Gateway, a series of rail projects between New Jersey and New York City. **Ten House Republicans sent a letter to Speaker Ryan last week** urging him to strip the \$900 million that had been included for the project by Appropriations Chairman Rodney Frelinghuysen (R-NJ). In the end, the omnibus included funds that can go toward the project but does not require them to be used for it.

Overall, USDOT's top-line discretionary figure adds up to \$27.3 billion, an \$8.7 billion increase from current spending. Some highlights include:

- **STBGP:** FAST Act highway programs are fully funded and the bill also includes a one-time increase of \$198 billion for the Surface Transportation Block Grant Program (STBGP). The increase will be distributed as it is through the FAST Act, meaning that funds will be suballocated to local areas. The funds are only eligible for road, bridge, and tunnel projects, and the STBGP set-aside (TAP) is waived. The bill includes an additional amount for public/Indian lands and territories (\$320 million); and a new competitive bridge program in states with densities of less than 100 persons per square mile (\$225 million).
- **Transit:** Transit receives full FAST Act funding with an additional \$834 million in general fund appropriations, which includes funding for state of good repair grants, buses, and bus facilities.
- **New Life for New Starts:** While the administration proposed narrowing the Capital Investment Grants Program (New Starts) funding to only cover projects already underway, the omnibus agreement provides nearly \$400 million for new projects. This is an overall increase of \$232 million.
- **TIGER Grants:** The TIGER program increased to \$1.5 billion, tripling FY 2017's funding level of \$500 million. It provides some planning money for the first time in many years, allowing for up to \$15 million in planning grants. A minimum of 30 percent of the funds are reserved for rural areas, an increase from the current 20 percent requirement.
- **Rail:** The bill includes large increases for several FRA programs, including Amtrak which will receive \$1.9 billion (an increase of \$447 million) with \$650 million allocated for capital projects along the Northeast Corridor (an increase of \$322 million). The bill also includes funding for three FAST Act rail programs that previously received far less than their authorized amounts: the consolidated grant program (\$593 million) to support PTC installation; the federal-state partnership state of good repair program (\$250 million); and restoration and enhancement grants (\$20 million).
- **Automated Vehicle Research:** The bill repurposes funds to create a \$100 million pot for study grants and implementation of an overall study program.

- **No Rescissions:** The previous version of House and Senate bills would have rescinded contract authority, and an amendment by Representative Rob Woodall (R-GA) to the House bill would have made suballocated STBGP subject to rescission. Since this bill ditches the rescission, there is no need for the amendment.
- **Clearview Font:** The bill temporarily prohibits the use of funds to enforce the termination of an Interim Approval to use the Clearview Font on highway signs and requires FHWA to conduct a “comprehensive review” of the research and report back to the House and Senate Appropriations Committees.
- **Extends FAA:** FAA reauthorization is now extended through September.
- **CDBG Program:** The Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program received \$3.3 billion in funding for FY 2018, the amount requested by NARC and the CDBG Coalition.
- **Brownfields Reauthorization:** Brownfields language was included in the omnibus package.
- **State Workforce Formula Grants:** Title I of the *Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act* (WIOA) saw a combined increase of \$80 million.
- **Water Funding:** The bill increases the Clean Water State Revolving Funds and Safe Drinking Water State Revolving Funds by \$300 million each, and increases funding for the WIFIA loan program by \$53 million.

ADMINISTRATION BRIEF

Task Force to Unclog Water Infrastructure Backup

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) is forming a task force to examine how to reduce a \$96 billion backlog of water infrastructure projects. The task force will examine what is hindering work on approximately 1,000 USACE projects for repairing existing locks and dams, expanding ports, dredging rivers, and other projects. During a House subcommittee hearing, R.D. James, the newly appointed assistant secretary of the Army for civil works, said they will work to streamline permitting, transfer more authority to states, and reduce opportunities for litigation.

USDOT Announces TIGER Grants to 41 Projects in 43 States

USDOT has announced 41 projects selected to receive part of the \$500 million funding available through the Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) program. More than 64 percent of the funding will go to rural projects, a much higher level than previous years. Projects include a flood warning system project in Houston and a trail connector project in Philadelphia.

White Paper: Nature-Based Solutions for Coastal Highway Resilience

This FHWA white paper describes the current state of practice regarding the use of natural and nature-based features to protect coastal roads from flooding. It provides an overview of available tools for design, implementation challenges, and knowledge gaps. Examples included in the paper of nature-based features are the restoration of dunes, wetlands, maritime forests, beaches, and reefs. These features can protect coastal highways from the brunt of storm surges and waves. Case studies are also included in this resource.

Update on Second Round of Designations for Alternative Fuels Corridor Program

FHWA recently completed the second round of designations for the Alternative Fuels Corridor program. These designations are puzzle pieces used to create a national network of alternative vehicle fueling and charging infrastructure along the nation’s highway system. To date, FHWA’s Alternative Fuels Corridor Program includes 44 states plus DC designated as corridor-ready or corridor-pending for one or more alternative fuel types, and designations on segments or entire lengths of 71 Interstate corridors. Take a look at the updated maps on [FHWA’s webpage](#).

Ivanka Trump to Campaign for White House Infrastructure Plan

Presidential Adviser Ivanka Trump visited Iowa on Monday to promote the White House infrastructure plan and workforce development program. She visited and held a roundtable discussion at Waukee APEX, a complex which allows students from Waukee High School and other area schools to explore various career paths through hands-on projects and work experiences with local employers. She was accompanied by Governor Kim Reynolds who met with Ivanka Trump last December on these issues.

Hyperloop Could Be Included in Trump Proposal

Transportation Undersecretary Derek Kan told a group last week that Hyperloop could be one of the first projects funded through the administration's infrastructure initiative. The \$20 billion transformative projects program is the smallest of three grant programs in the proposal. Kan indicated that self-driving trucks could also benefit from the transformative projects program.

NARC, NLC, NACTO, and ACT Respond to NHTSA Request for Comments

NARC, National League of Cities (NLC), National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO), and the Association for Commuter Transportation (ACT) submitted joint comments this week to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's (NHTSA) Request for Comments on **Removing Unnecessary Regulatory Barriers to Automatic Safety Technologies**. The comments emphasized the need for funding and open dialogue with the federal government and private sector to deploy autonomous vehicles.

NYC CV Pilot's Built-In Performance Measurement Shows Comprehensive Development and Deployment

As one of USDOT's Intelligent Transportation Systems Joint Program Office (ITS JPO) connected vehicle (CV) pilot programs, New York City is collecting and analyzing performance measurements for deployed CV technologies and applications. Their CV pilot is creating a built-in performance measurement system with vehicle-to-vehicle (V2V), vehicle-to-infrastructure (V2I), and vehicle-to-pedestrian (V2P) communication that automatically captures relevant vehicle information, combines it with additional contextual data, and creates performance dashboards. This information will demonstrate how safety-related warnings can be shared and used in the real world. The data generated by the pilot program will advance the city's safety and traffic management goals.

Investigation into Collapsed Florida Bridge

Transportation Secretary Chao has asked USDOT's Office of Inspector General to audit the fatal Florida pedestrian bridge collapse. Investigators will explore if the project team adhered to the relevant requirements mandated by its federal funding. The bridge was installed earlier this month using modular construction and used TIGER program funding. The project was supposed to represent the future of bridge construction and be able to withstand Florida hurricanes.

REGIONS BRIEF

Employment Data for Planning: A Resource Guide

This research and technical guide provides a single point of reference for information on employment data. This information is structured to provide summary-level, practical information to help planning professionals understand the range of available data sources, how data may be applied, and which data source is best suited for transportation planning applications. The report was conducted for the AASHTO Standing Committee on Planning, with funding provided through the National Cooperative Highway Research Program (NCHRP) Project 08-36.

The Perfect Selfishness of Mapping Apps

Researchers from the University of California Berkeley's Institute of Transportation Studies (ITS) recently examined the traffic impacts of high levels of automatic routing and mapping apps. Mapping apps increase congestion on off-ramps when there are accidents on the freeway and mapping apps can act as a "tragedy of the commons." When only a few people use them they experience benefits, but as more people use them conditions deteriorate. The researchers also gathered local stories of resident complaints about increased traffic volumes. One solution, cited by ITS Director Alexandre Bayen, is for app companies to collaborate and spread out drivers on different routes to help ease traffic.

Preparing Communities for AVs

This report details a symposium held at NLC in October to discuss planning for impacts from autonomous vehicles (AVs) in cities and regions. The report details the discussion at the symposium, including the scenario-planning exercise that created subtopics that need to be addressed. It concludes with a checklist of suggestions on how to begin planning for AVs and a list of resources on AVs.

JOBS

View full list of jobs!

Manager, Office of Travel Monitoring

Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission, Philadelphia, PA

RFP: Great Lakes Hyperloop Feasibility Study

Northeast Ohio Areawide Coordinating Agency, Cleveland, OH

OPPORTUNITIES

View full list of grants and events!

How to Think About Model Design for Your Region

March 28, 2:00 – 4:00 PM ET

Agencies now face a complex choice when developing or updating their passenger travel demand model. The alternatives include both very simple, traditional as well as enhanced trip-based designs, activity-based designs of varying complexity, and intermediate hybrid designs in between. Given that agencies typically only perform major updates to their travel models once or twice in a decade, it is important that agencies understand both the advantages and disadvantages of alternative approaches. This webinar presents a new TMIP how-to guide designed to help agencies understand the full spectrum of model designs available to them, as well as their associated advantages and disadvantages.

CTPP Oversight Board Webinar on Small Geography Data Reporting

April 3, 1:00 – 2:30 PM ET

In January the CTPP Oversight Board officially announced that following the 2012-2016 dataset in 2019, it will discontinue requesting small geography at the Transportation Analysis Zone (TAZ) and Transportation Analysis District (TAD) levels, adopting the standard Census Block Group for future data tabulations. To support the creation of Block Groups that are useful for transportation planning the Board is recommending that the transportation community review and comment on the current Federal Register's notice on criteria for 2020 Census geography, and to participate in the 2020 Census Participant Statistical Areas Program (PSAP). To help the transportation community prepare for this change the Board will host a webinar to review the Board's policy, Census criteria and PSAP programs, and how one agency will be involved with PSAP and what that means for MPOs and states.

Making the Case for Transit

April 11, 2:00 – 3:00 PM ET

Every trip is a walking trip, whether you are on foot the entire way or just to the nearest transit stop. Transit can be a critical partner and advocate in the fight for walkable communities. Working together, we can create livable communities where all members have access to school, work, play, and more. This webinar will feature successful resources, programs, and campaigns on how to make the case for people-first walking and transit solutions. This webinar assumes some knowledge of issues related to walking and walkability.

AARP's 2018 Community Challenge Grant Opportunity

Applications Due: May 16 by 5:00 PM ET

AARP's Community Challenge for grant funding is for "quick-action" projects that can help your community become more livable for all ages. Applications will be accepted for small grants to improve housing, transportation, public spaces, and other community elements. Last year, AARP funded 88 projects representing all 50 states and the District of Columbia. The program is open to nonprofit community organizations and government entities; other types of organizations will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

10th National Aviation System Planning Symposium

May 20 – 23, Anchorage, Alaska

The National Aviation System Planning Symposium is a triennial event organized by the Transportation Research Board Committees on Aviation System Planning and Intergovernmental Relations in Aviation with the goal of assessing the state of the art in system planning, addressing current issues confronting the airport and aviation industry, and identifying research needs to inform the future research agenda for aviation system planning. The symposium brings together

system planning consultants; airport and aviation system planners and managers; air carrier and other aviation industry representatives; federal, state, and local transportation planners and officials; and others interested in the future development of the aviation system and its role in the larger multi-modal transportation system.

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