



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF REGIONAL COUNCILS

TRANSPORTATION THURSDAYS

## CONGRESS BRIEF

### House Passes FY16 Budget Resolution

The House passed its fiscal year 2016 budget resolution yesterday, **228-199**. Every Democrat and seventeen Republicans opposed the measure. The budget plan seeks to cut spending by \$5.5 trillion over a decade while repealing Obamacare and balancing the nation's budget without raising taxes. The bill contains several important transportation measures. First, it slashes available budget authority for the transportation program, reducing mandatory budget authority (including HTF contract authority) from \$54 billion in FY15 to less than \$6 billion in FY16. This would leave as little as \$2 billion in new contract authority next year (as compared to \$50 billion in FY15). The bill contains a place holder "reserve fund," in the event additional revenue is found that could be used to increase the spending allocation. Otherwise, the proposed budget would significantly reduce transportation spending. The House budget also eliminates all operating subsidies for Amtrak passenger rail service, zeroes out the popular Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) program, and eliminates the Essential Air Service (EAS) program.

### Senate Rejects Sanders Amendment

Senator Bernie Sanders (I-VT) offered an amendment to the FY16 Senate budget proposal, which called for a \$478 billion investment in infrastructure improvements over six years paid for by closing tax loopholes that allow corporations to shift profits overseas. The amendment was rejected 52-45 in a party-line vote.

### Bipartisan Proposal to Increase Gas Tax

Representatives Bill Pascrell (D-NJ) and Jim Renacci (R-OH), both members of the House Ways and Means Committee, will introduce legislation that would require Congress to identify new funding for transportation or face the political cost of a gas tax increase. The bill would index the gas tax to inflation starting this year. It would also create a commission that would be tasked with finding a long-term transportation funding solution. More details once the bill is introduced.

### Disaster Assistance Reform Introduced

House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee Chairman Bill Shuster (R-PA) and Ranking Member Peter DeFazio (D-OR), with Economic Development, Public Buildings, and Emergency Management Subcommittee Chairman Lou Barletta (R-PA) and Ranking Member Andre Carson (D-IN), have introduced the *FEMA Disaster Assistance Reform Act of 2015* (**H.R. 1471**). The bill would provide the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) with authorization for programs that reduce losses during disaster events and reduce costs while hastening recovery, like the Urban Search and Rescue Response System.

## Support for TIGER Program

In support of an eighth round of the TIGER program in FY16, Senators Patty Murray (D-WA) and Dick Durbin (D-IL) drafted a letter for colleagues to share with the Appropriations Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing, and Urban Development. The letter encourages continued investment in the TIGER program, citing that current demand for TIGER funding far exceeds that available through the program, and that TIGER leverages further investment from all levels to resolve economic and transportation challenges.

## Massie Would Make HTF Solely for Highways

Congressman Thomas Massie (R-KY) recently introduced the *Developing Roadway Infrastructure for a Vibrant Economy Act of 2015* (DRIVE; **H.R. 1461**) along with co-sponsors Jim Jordan (R-OH), Justin Amash (R-MI), Jim Birdenstine (R-OK), and Ken Buck (R-CO). The bill would eliminate funding for transit, bike, and pedestrian projects from the HTF. According to Massie, the resources provided by the federal HTF are being diverted from critical highway and bridge projects toward “local projects that have no federal nexus.”

## REGIONS BRIEF

### Mayors Weigh In On Transportation Funding

At a **press conference** in Boston, the U.S. Conference of Mayors encouraged quick congressional action on a transportation infrastructure funding bill. New York Mayor Bill de Blasio emphasized that a strong transportation system is the backbone to fighting inequality and spurring economic growth. Boston Mayor Martin Walsh added that mayors and their cities need federal investment to strengthen their municipalities, which he called, “the building blocks of this nation.”

## JOBS

[View full list of jobs!](#)

### Director of Finance & Administration

Centralina Council of Governments, Charlotte, NC

### Deputy Executive Director

Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, Chicago, IL

## OPPORTUNITIES

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

### How We Align Decisions and Dollars Survey

March 30, 1:00-2:00 PM ET

Through a series of virtual sessions, USDOT will gather insights and feedback on the **DRAFT Beyond Traffic Framework**. In this last session of the series, participants will clarify how the American transportation system is financed and governed, and will be given the opportunity to discuss policy solutions regarding the future role of public and private sectors in finance and governance.

### **NTSB Forum: Disconnect from Deadly Distractions**

March 31, 9:00 AM – 4:00 PM ET

The National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) is hosting a public roundtable discussion to combat transportation distractions in all modes of transportation resulting from the increase in personal electronic devices and infotainment systems. Nearly forty experts from the industry, government, and academic sectors will offer their insight and perspective on solutions.

### **Walking College Fellowships**

Orientation **Webinar**, April 2, 1:00 PM ET

**Applications** due April 17, 8:00 PM ET

America Walks is accepting applications for up to twenty-five fellowships to its Walking College, a self-study program that aims to train local leaders to improve walkability in their communities. Awarded fellows are those candidates who can commit to spending at least five hours per week on program-related activities from June through October, including completing instructional assignments, conducting an eight-week independent study project, and attending the National Walking Summit.

### **Speak Up for Transit**

April 2, 2:00 PM ET

In conjunction with its *Speak Up for Transit Day* on April 9, the Community Transportation Association of America will provide this webinar as a resource to guide interactions with federal, state, and local elected officials in support of public transit in the impending surface transportation reauthorization. The webinar will present key policy objectives and offer practical tips for facilitating discussion.

### **FHWA's Climate Resilience Pilots**

April 7, 2:00-4:00 PM ET

Over the course of 2013 and 2014, FHWA partnered with various state DOTs, MPOs, and Federal Land Management Agencies to conduct 19 **climate resilience pilots** that assessed transportation infrastructure for climate change and extreme weather vulnerability. Representatives from the Oregon DOT; Washington DOT; Caltrans District 1 in Eureka, CA; and the Metropolitan Transportation Commission in San Francisco, CA will share the results of their climate change resilience projects and comment on lessons learned for adaptation.

### **Scalable, Data Driven Analysis**

April 9, 2:30-4:00 PM ET

Through its Travel Model Improvement Program, FHWA presents its second webinar in a series of three. Presenters John Davis and Zev Winkelman from the RAND Corporation will discuss various models for data storage and identify important characteristics and classes of basic algorithms.

**CONTACT US**