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## NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF REGIONAL COUNCILS

March 27, 2014

# Transportation Thursdays

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## **ADMINISTRATIVE BRIEF**

**Highway Account of HTF Could Default in July:** Previous estimates showed the highway account of the Highway Trust Fund (HTF) running out of money in August or September, and the transit account not too long after that. The newest estimate from the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) has the highway account becoming insolvent in July. Since federal law prohibits the HTF from running a deficit, the agency will have to wait for gas tax revenues to come in before payments will be allowed to go out. Instead of daily payments to states, payments would instead be made several times a week, or even weekly. We anticipate that most states are preparing for this potential outcome,

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Chair, Transportation  
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Assistant Executive  
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as the writing has been on the wall for a long time. Still there will be negative consequences, especially if the situation drags on for an extended period.

**Safety Performance Management Overview Presentations:** The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Office of Transportation Performance Management has announced that the presentations from the Safety Performance Management Overview webcasts that took place on March 13 and March 19 are now available for viewing. These webcasts dealt with *An Overview of Notice of Proposed Rulemakings Related to Safety Performance Management*. You can click **HERE** for the presentations, **HERE** for the March 13 webcast recording, and **HERE** for the March 19 webcast recording.

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## **LEGISLATIVE BRIEF**

**Hearing: Reauthorization, State and Local Perspectives, on Transportation Priorities and Funding:** The U.S. Senate Committee on Environment & Public Works held a hearing today regarding transportation reauthorization based on state and local perspectives concerning priorities and funding. The committee invited a diverse group of witnesses to give testimony and answer questions. The witness list included Director Michael Lewis of the Rhode Island DOT, Deputy Secretary Sue Minter of the Vermont Agency of Transportation, Indianapolis Mayor Greg Ballard, Oklahoma City Mayor Mick Cornett, President Bill Fontenot of St. Landry's Parish in Louisiana, Chairman Jim Willox of the Converse County Commission in Wyoming, and Principal Planner Dave Gula of the Wilmington Area Planning Council in Delaware.

Chairman Barbara Boxer (D-CA) began the hearing by discussing the condition of the HTF (above). Chairman Boxer expressed hope that Congress would be able to come together to pass a six year bill before insolvency sets in, to provide some stability moving forward. A common theme among all the witnesses was the notion that a shortfall in the HTF would be disastrous, and that that there would be serious consequences for everyone – local, state, and federal – if this situation is allowed to drag on. Witnesses emphasized how this predicament has already had a negative impact on projects. Michael Lewis, Director of Rhode Island DOT, pointed out his state's overwhelming reliance on federal funds (they have no state-level highway program), which has forced them to stop advertising for bids on new projects. Mayor Ballard highlighted the

effectiveness of *the Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP)*; the need to keep the decision-making in the hands of locals; and the importance of encouraging walking, bicycling, and transit. Mayor Cornett discussed the need for better streamlining and highlighted the negative consequences of what he called “agency overreach.” Also highlighted were off-system bridges, local control, and the competitive *Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) Program*.

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## REGIONAL BRIEF

**Travel Survey Aims to Improve Commute Options:** In an effort to ease congestion on the I-5 and SR 99 corridors between San Joaquin County and Sacramento County, The San Joaquin Council of Governments and the Sacramento Area Council of Governments are carrying out a survey for people who use these freeways at least once per week. According to the press release, “The commuter user survey is used to gain insight into what might make commuters choose an alternative to driving alone, while the employer survey will help planners understand what transportation issues affect businesses in an effort to help improve productivity and save time and money for commuting.” To incentivize participation, those that complete the survey will have a chance to win prizes, including an iPad Mini, 1,000 Commuter Club Points, or even 1 of 8 \$25 gas gift cards. This story is a great example of the innovative tools that transportation planners around the country are implementing to help gather information to better plan for the future.

**New Transportation Coalition Launches Alliance for American Competitiveness:** A new business coalition led by Caterpillar Inc. Chairman and Chief Executive Officer Doug Oberhelman and former Mississippi Gov. Haley Barbour recently announced the launch of Alliance for American Competitiveness (AFAC) on March 24. AFAC will be dedicated to promoting economic growth through strategic infrastructure investment. According to a press release by Caterpillar Inc., “The coalition will be used to accomplish three goals – to inform lawmakers about the local and regional economic benefits of infrastructure investment; to advocate for a long-term stable revenue source for infrastructure investment; and, to define the broad economic impact of infrastructure investment.” The Executive Board of the Alliance will be comprised of Caterpillar, Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway, Dow, Honeywell, and UPS. The formation of this group and its timing is

related to the surface transportation legislation currently being considered for reauthorization by Congress.

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## OPPORTUNITY BRIEF

Click [HERE](#) to view the list of grants and events still open!

### **WEBINAR: How the FAF Can Help You**

*April 10, 1:00 – 2:15 PM ET; Registration deadline April 7*

FHWA will offer practitioners in state DOTs, metropolitan/regional planning organizations, and other agencies an overview of how the Freight Analysis Framework (FAF) can make a difference. FHWA will outline the FAF's main components and give examples of using the FAF for statewide and metropolitan level issues. This webinar is aimed at practitioners with basic or no knowledge of the FAF, but who would like to move to the next skill level. It will also provide a useful foundation for more advanced topics (e.g., linking FAF with county-level data, using FAF for statewide freight planning) that will be covered in future webinars. To register, click [HERE](#) by April 7.

### **SURVEY: Help Improve Scenario/Sketch Planning Tools for NHRCP**

*Deadline: April 11*

Your assistance is requested in completing a 10-minute survey regarding your use of and experience with regional scenario/sketch planning tools. These tools include CommunityViz, Envision Tomorrow or Envision Tomorrow Plus (ET+), i-PLACE3S, INDEX or SPARC/INDEX, UPlan, UrbanFootprint, or other similar tools. The survey is being conducted as part of a National Cooperative Highway Research Program (NCHRP) project to review and evaluate these tools. The project will also provide guidance on their application and enhancement. Click [HERE](#) to take the survey.

### **WEBINAR: Keeping Pedestrians Safe in Urban and Suburban Communities**

*April 11, 2:00 PM ET*

Pedestrian safety is on everyone's mind. This discussion forum will dive deeper into the topics presented at the March 20th webinar where Noah Budnick describes New York City's *Vision Zero Campaign*, working toward zero deaths, zero injuries, and zero fear of traffic. Michael King will discuss community design, specifically in suburban settings, and how it can have a positive or negative influence on pedestrian safety. Both Noah and Michael will be present at this discussion forum to

answer your questions. This program is hosted by America Walks and made possible with support from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, in partnership with the American Public Health Association. Click [HERE](#) to register.

**WEBINAR: Putting the Mettle to the Pedal: Ideas for Promoting Bicycling**

*April 16, 2:00 PM ET*

This webinar will feature two presentations: The first presentation will share one program's secrets for keeping its seven year old bike promotion program fresh and sustained, including event themes and bicycling field trips. The second presentation will talk about how they are engaging 6th grade students in bike safety and the key partners that have catapulted excitement for bicycling to new heights. This is the first of four webinars that will be presented by the National Center for Safe Routes to School. Click [HERE](#) to register.

**WEBINAR: FHWA Programs and Policies to Advance Livability**

*APRIL 17, 1:00 PM ET*

Sponsored by the FHWA Office of Human Environment, this webinar will help transportation practitioners better understand the potential benefits and challenges of programmatic and policy approaches for fostering livable communities. Presenters will discuss the evolution of Massachusetts DOT livability policies, associated implementation, and the development of livability policies and initiatives in Sandpoint, Idaho, a small town in transition. Click [HERE](#) to register.

**WEBINAR: Strategies to Transform the Built Environment: Lighter, Quicker, Cheaper, and Healthier**

*April 17, 1:30 PM ET*

An increasing number of communities are accelerating their progress through *Lighter, Quicker, Cheaper* (LQC) strategies to transform the built environment by taking incremental steps, using low-cost experiments, tapping into local talent, and paving the way towards longer term change. Presenters from the *Project for Public Spaces*, will address the importance of creating healthy places and a quick overview of placemaking. They will define LQC, outline design principles, and present several examples of communities that have used innovative, inexpensive "fixes" to improve health. This program is hosted by America Walks and made possible with support from Shaping New Jersey, the state partnership for nutrition, physical activity, and obesity prevention. Click [HERE](#) to register.

**CONFERENCE: NARC's 48th Annual Conference and Exhibition**

*June 8-11, Louisville, KY*

The Annual Conference and Exhibition is the largest national event focused on promoting effective regional cooperation and solutions through interaction and education. Held annually in June, NARC's Annual Conference is the premier place to learn how to engage in effective regional collaboration. Additional information will be available in early 2014. Click [HERE](#) for more information.

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