



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF REGIONAL COUNCILS

April 3, 2014

Transportation Thursdays

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ADMINISTRATIVE BRIEF

U.S. DOT Issues Rearview Camera Rule: The U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) recently issued a rule that will require new cars and light trucks to have backup cameras to help prevent accidents in which drivers accidentally back over pedestrians, killing hundreds annually. Automakers will be required to install rearview cameras or similar technology in all new vehicles weighing less than 10,000 pounds beginning in May 2018. The new rule mandates that a 10-foot-by-20-foot zone directly behind the vehicle be visible to the driver. The system must also meet other requirements including image size, linger time, response time, and durability. A 2008 law passed by Congress was

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named after Cameron Gulbransen, a toddler backed over and killed at age 2. The law directed U.S. DOT to issue a rear visibility standard by 2011. The Administration delayed the deadline numerous times, but finally issued the new rule earlier this week.

LEGISLATIVE BRIEF

House Budget Proposal Released: Rep. Paul Ryan (R-WI), in his last budget cycle as Chairman of the House Budget Committee, this week released the fiscal year (FY) 2015 version of the House budget. Titled again, "Path to Prosperity," Ryan's budget seeks to balance the nation's budget by 2024 through significant spending cuts. Transportation funding plays a key role in the overall approach Ryan takes to achieving this goal, including a zeroing out of obligations for transportation in FY15. This "year off" is intended to give the highway trust fund (HTF) time to build some reserves; at present, the highway account is projected to become insolvent in July and the transit account soon thereafter. By eliminating new obligations for FY15, the Ryan budget reduces federal surface transportation outlays by approximately \$13 billion next year. The Ryan budget proposal leaves open the possibility of a general fund transfer into the HTF (either to close the deficit the fund faces this year or as part of a reauthorization package), but only if such a transfer is offset in the year the transfer occurs (current rules allow for general fund transfers into the HTF but does not require they be offset). Separately, the Ryan budget permits the creation of a "reserve fund" for transportation, which essentially allows for spending above the limits set by the budget - so long as it "maintains the solvency of the Highway Trust Fund" and occurs under the condition that it "would not increase the deficit over the period of fiscal years 2015 through 2024." In simpler terms, both of these provisions make a transfer to the HTF permissible, but places conditions upon such transfers.

The Ryan budget also recommends eliminating funding for Amtrak operating subsidies and calls for a reduction in headquarters and administrative costs for agencies. Proposed reforms include a pilot program for states to fund their transportation priorities solely with state revenues that would allow them to opt out of paying the federal gas tax and phasing out subsidies for the *Essential Air Service* program.

Senate Finance Committee to Markup Tax Extenders Bill: Earlier this week, Sen. Ron Wyden (D-OR) released a bill that will extend a long set of expired and soon-to-expire tax breaks for another year. The

Senate Finance Committee will begin markup on the bill, *Expiring Provisions Improvement Reform and Efficiency Act (EXPIRE)*, today (April 3). Only two of the breaks have a direct transportation connection. One provides parity between employer-provided mass transit and parking benefits. According to the Joint Committee on Taxation (JCT) analysis: “The bill would extend through 2015 the increase in the monthly exclusion for employer-provided transit and vanpool benefits from \$130 to \$250, so that it would be the same as the exclusion for employer-provided parking benefits.” Another provision provides a credit for businesses for railroad track maintenance; “The bill extends for two years, through 2015, the railroad maintenance credit that provides Class II and Class III railroads (generally, short-line and regional railroads) with a tax credit equal to 50 percent of gross expenditures for maintaining railroad tracks that they own or lease.” The JCT analysis of the bill can be found [HERE](#).

REGIONAL BRIEF

Letter Calls on the Federal Government to Establish a Freight Trust

Fund: A letter co-signed by thirteen of the nation’s largest metropolitan and regional planning organizations requests that Congress establish a “Freight Trust Fund,” to be funded at a minimum of \$2 billion per year for freight investments as part of the next transportation reauthorization bill. The letter also requests that metropolitan regions be integrated into the freight investment decision-making process and that the national freight network be redefined to comprise a multimodal transportation system. U.S. Senator Barbara Boxer (D-CA), Chairman of the Environmental and Public Works Committee, read the letter into the record during a hearing last week. Click [HERE](#) to read the letter.

OPPORTUNITY BRIEF

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

ONLINE DIALOGUE: Section 5310 Formula Grant Performance Measures

March 31 – April 18

The *Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP-21)* has a new initiative associated with the Section 5310 formula grants—for the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) to submit a report to Congress recommending performance measures for these community grants.

Section 5310 grants are “intended to enhance mobility for seniors and persons with disabilities by providing funds for programs to serve the special needs of transit-dependent populations beyond traditional public transportation services and Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) complementary paratransit services.” This online dialogue is focused on obtaining feedback on performance measures regarding accessibility, availability, affordability, and safety. To participate and view additional information, click [HERE](#).

WEBINAR: Programs and Policies to Advance Livability

April 17, 1:00 PM ET

This webinar is designed to 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 and associated implementation; and the development of livability policies and initiatives in Sandpoint, Idaho, a small town in transition. Click [HERE](#) to register.

WEBINAR: National Performance Measure Research Data Set (NPMRDS) (Probe Data)

May 15, 1:00 PM ET

This webinar training and information sharing session for the NPMRDS probe data set that Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) made available to states and MPOs. Topics will include: Basics overview for new users, Demonstration of conflation to HPMS data, Advance analysis of travel time data, and Q&A. Click [HERE](#) to register, and [HERE](#) for more information about FHWA’s NPMRDS data set.

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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