

April 21, 2016 [View this email in your browser](#)



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF REGIONAL COUNCILS

TRANSPORTATION THURSDAYS



**Notice to Members!** FHWA released a notice of proposed rulemaking (see article in Administration section below) regarding system performance. We would like to consult a group of members for their reactions to this rule, and help us understand its impacts. Your feedback is crucial as we develop our response to the rule and prepare comments to the docket. If you are interested in participating, please drop a note to Erich Zimmermann ([erich@narc.org](mailto:erich@narc.org)). Thanks for your help!

## CONGRESS BRIEF

### **Senate Transportation Appropriations Subcommittee Approves 2017 Spending Bill**

Earlier today, the Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies Subcommittee of the Senate Appropriations Committee unanimously passed a \$77.9 billion spending bill for USDOT and HUD programs in FY2017. The bill fully funds the authorization levels for Highway Trust Fund programs as were authorized in the recent FAST Act transportation reauthorization. Additionally, the bill increases discretionary appropriations for USDOT by \$454 million over FY2016 levels and increases HUD appropriations by nearly \$1.5 billion. To pay for this increased spending, the Senate bill would rescind more than \$2.2 billion in unobligated highway contract authority.

A few programs of particular interest:

- **TIGER Program: NARC sent a letter to appropriators** supporting the administration's \$1.25 billion request for TIGER discretionary grants. The Senate bill funds TIGER well below that, at \$525 million. This figure does, however, represent a \$25 million increase over the FY2016 TIGER funding level.
- **Capital Investment Grants (FTA):** NARC requested that appropriators match the FAST Act funding levels for Capital Investment Grants (New Starts, Small Starts). The Senate actually went beyond FAST Act levels, providing nearly \$2.4 billion (compared to just over \$2.3 billion).
- Notably, though not surprisingly, the Senate bill does not contain the administration's \$17.9 billion *21<sup>st</sup> Century Clean Transportation Plan*, which it proposed to pay for with a new crude oil fee.

### **Senate Passes FAA Reauthorization Bill**

On Tuesday, the Senate passed its FAA reauthorization bill by a resounding 95-3. The 18-month bill does not include a final bipartisan package of 26 amendments that lawmakers were hoping to include. The package was dropped when Senator Rand Paul (R-KY), who wanted consideration of an unrelated amendment, refused to allow adoption by unanimous consent. Earlier, the Senate also dropped a package of renewable energy tax breaks. The bill includes several security and safety provisions, drone regulations, and consumer reforms on airline baggage fees and refunds.

In the House, Bill Shuster (R-PA), Chairman of the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, released a statement following the passage of the bill stating that he will look at the Senate bill but will continue to push for air traffic control privatization in his version. This leaves a huge question mark as to whether a final bill can be completed before the July 15 expiration.

## **ADMINISTRATION BRIEF**

### **FHWA System Performance NPRM**

Earlier this week, FHWA released a copy of the Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM) proposing national performance measures regarding performance of the National Highway System, Freight Movement on the Interstate System, and the CMAQ program. This is an advanced copy of the NPRM; the official version will be released tomorrow, April 22. This is the third of three rules from FHWA establishing national measures of performance, and is by far the most extensive and far-reaching of the three. This rule will have implications for MPOs and for the planning process in general. You can find the **current advanced copy** of the NPRM on the FHWA website.

Earlier today, FHWA held a webinar providing an overview of the rule. A recording of this webinar will be available soon from their **performance management website**. FHWA will be hosting three additional webinars focused on different elements of the NPRM:

April 25, 1:00-3:30 PM ET: **Freight Measures**

April 26, 1:00 – 3:30 PM ET: **System Performance Webinar**

May 3, 1:00 – 3:30 PM ET: **CMAQ Webinar**

### **USDOT Announces Projects Selected for Clean Buses & Infrastructure**

Seven grant projects - totaling \$22.5 million in grants - have been selected as part of USDOT's Low and No-emission Vehicle Deployment Program to improve buses and bus facilities. Among the projects selected, the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) is sponsoring two grants to expand an electric bus program in their region.

## **REGIONS BRIEF**

### **New Transit Connectivity Database**

A new website, **AllTransit**, combines transit data such as routes, stops, and frequency from 805 transit agencies across the country to show connectivity throughout the United States. The tool shows information on access to jobs and housing and can help users explore the options and effectiveness of transit networks in their region.

## **Tucson Alt-fuel Buses Take Aim at Childhood Asthma**

The Pima Association of Governments (PAG) program, Tucson Clean Cities, has replaced several school buses in the area with alternative fuel vehicles as part of a grant from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. The retrofitted buses run on compressed natural gas and propane and are quieter and cheaper to maintain than their previous diesel buses. Changes such as this are helping the region meet air quality emissions standards and provide health benefits such as reducing asthma in children.

## **JOBS**

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

## **OPPORTUNITIES**

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

### **Multi-Sector P3s: How P3s Can Help Improve Public Infrastructure Needs**

April 28, 2:00 PM ET

Increasingly, states have turned to new approaches to ensure their public infrastructure is safe and effective. Many states are looking at using public-private partnerships (P3s) as one tactic to build, maintain, and operate public infrastructure. This webinar will provide insight into the National Conference of State Legislatures policy research and programming surrounding P3s. Participants will hear about new research on the tangible benefits associated with sound P3 enabling statutes.

### **Health Impact Assessments: Their Role in Transportation Planning**

May 4, 11:00 AM – 12:00 PM ET

Health Impact Assessments (HIAs) are a means of assessing the health impacts of policies, plans, and projects in various economic sectors using quantitative, qualitative, and participatory methods. Transportation systems contribute to traffic injuries, air pollution, diseases resulting from physical inactivity, and noise. These risks can be reduced by "healthy transport policies" that promote walking and cycling. This webinar is a direct result of a previous conference on the topic and will feature some of the key speakers.

### **NARC Webinar! Partnering for Strong Economies: Regional Councils & Walkable Communities**

May 5, 2:00 PM ET

Join NARC and America Walks for a webinar on how federal transportation funding is allocated through regional councils and how to access it for projects that promote walkable communities, including complete streets, safety efforts, and place-making. Attendees will explore two unique perspectives as we hear from a regional planner and an advocate who has worked to use the resources available from their regional council. Q&A to follow.

### **Call to Action: Paths to Walkable Communities**

May 12, 2:00 PM ET

This America Walks webinar will look at local organizations and governments who are taking action to Step It Up! in creating walkable communities. Presenters include two recipients of the Every Body Walk! Micro Grants followed by a city with one of the top Complete Streets policies in the US. Participants will have a chance to ask questions of the panel to learn how they might make their own communities great places to walk.

## **CONTACT US**

