



**NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF REGIONAL COUNCILS**

TRANSPORTATION THURSDAYS



## CONGRESS BRIEF

### **Omnibus Package Goes to President's Desk**

The House and Senate have completed work on an omnibus spending package, ahead of the expiration of the current CR. The \$1.1 billion fiscal 2017 package funds the government through the rest of fiscal year 2017 and will now go to President Trump's desk ahead of a government shutdown. The bill provides stable funding for several transportation programs that were slated for cuts by President Trump. The TIGER grant program is funded at \$500 million, the same as fiscal year 2016, and both the FTA Capital Investment program and the Essential Air Service (EAS) subsidy program maintain or receive increased funding.

### **Infrastructure Project Streamlining and Efficiency Hearing**

Yesterday, the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee heard from three witnesses about infrastructure project streamlining. The hearing downplayed the potential of public private partnerships for funding projects in rural states and suggested that reducing regulations would be the way to boost money to projects. Witnesses discussed permit overlaps, such as under the National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) and Clean Water Act Section 404, which require approval from different agencies. The witnesses were William Panos, Director of Wyoming Department of Transportation; Leah Pilconis, Consultant on Environmental Law & Policy, Associated General Contractors of America; and John Porcari, President of U.S. Advisory Services, WSP Parsons Brinckerhoff.

## ADMINISTRATION BRIEF

### **Trump Open to Raising the Gas Tax. Or Not.**

In a break from his party and the past administration, President Trump said in an interview with Bloomberg News this week that he would consider raising the gas tax for revenue for his \$1 trillion infrastructure plan. However, he is not committed to pursuing the idea and shortly after his comments were made public, White House press secretary Sean Spicer said that Trump has an "open mind" but does not support raising the gas tax at this point.

### **\$55 Million for Clean-Energy Transit Bus Projects**

The FTA has announced the process to apply for grant funds through their Low or No Emission (Low-No) Bus Program. The Low-No program supports projects sponsored by local transit agencies to bring technologies such as battery electric power and hydrogen fuel cells into bus service nationwide. FTA will award the grants to eligible transit agencies, state transportation departments, and Native American tribes on a competitive basis. The application deadline is June 26.

### **FHWA Mid-South Megaregion Workshop Report**

Last December, FHWA held a megaregion workshop in Memphis, Tennessee for the Mid-South. The event drew transportation officials from across the five-state megaregion to discuss regional issues and coordination. The report highlights outcomes and summaries of the presentations. Several area MPOs and state DOT representatives were present.

## **REGIONS BRIEF**

### **Beyond Speculation: Automated Vehicles and Public Policy**

While fully automated vehicles are not yet commercially available, changes in transportation technology must be realized and addressed by policy makers. The Eno Center for Transportation has **just released** an action plan for federal, state, and local policymakers after conducting extensive panels, workshops, and webinars with stakeholders. Eno's report provides 18 recommendations on a variety of topics including liability and insurance and infrastructure and funding. Specifically, Eno recommends that the federal government, not individual states, be responsible for approving AVs and AV technology.

### **MVRPC Celebrates National Air Quality Awareness Week**

The Miami Valley Regional Planning Commission (MVRPC) is celebrating *National Air Quality Awareness Week*, May 1-5, with daily posts on social media about the steps residents can take to reduce air pollution. This year's theme, selected by U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (US EPA), is *Be Air Aware*. This focus is about the impact that air quality has on your health. "The social media posts will highlight simple actions you can take to help reduce air pollution. We will be tagging the actions with #BeAirAware on MVRPC's **Facebook** and **Twitter** pages each day, so be sure to like and follow MVRPC to learn more," said MVRPC's Executive Director Brian Martin. MVRPC partners with the Regional Air Pollution Control Agency on air quality issues. More information can be found at [www.miamivalleyair.org](http://www.miamivalleyair.org).

### **Gov. Brown Signs Bill Raising Gas Tax and Vehicle Fees**

California Governor Jerry Brown signed legislation last Friday that raises the gas tax by 12 cents per gallon starting on November 1. The sales and excise taxes on diesel fuel will also go up by 4 percent and 20 cents per gallon respectively. Additionally, beginning in 2020 electric vehicle owners will pay a \$100 annual fee in lieu of gas taxes. Officials say most of the money will be split 50-50 between state and local projects and \$7 billion over the first ten years will go to mass transit projects. The new taxes and fees will raise \$5.2 billion annually.

## **JOBS**

***View full list of jobs!***

### **Director of Planning**

Southern California Association of Governments, Los Angeles, CA

### **Director, Department of Financial Affairs**

Mid-America Regional Council, Kansas City, MO

### **Emergency Services Planner**

Mid-America Regional Council, Kansas City, MO

### **RFP: Electronic Transportation Improvement Program (eTIP) System**

Association of Central Oklahoma Governments, Oklahoma City, OK

### **Grants Administrator**

San Diego Association of Governments, San Diego, CA

## Senior Director of Operations

Alamo Area Council of Governments, San Antonio, TX

## OPPORTUNITIES

*View full list of grants and events!*

### **Noteworthy Practices of Public-Private Sector Collaboration in Freight Planning**

May 9, 11:00 – 12:30 PM ET

This webinar will focus on collaborations between the public and private sector, which help to create better freight planning outcomes in both the U.S. and European Union. Two case studies will highlight such collaborations: London Borough of Barking and Dagenham and Partnerships with Conexus Indiana.

### **Current Trends in Multiagency Transit Electronic Fare Systems**

May 11, 2:00 – 3:30 PM ET

Electronic fare payment systems have had a transformative impact on transit services in the United States, enabling better data collection, integrated fare solutions, customer conveniences, and other advantages over the transit token or ticket that they replaced. Newer, Multiagency Electronic Fare Payment Systems (EFPS), adopted by groups of transit operators supporting multiple modes, provide customers with common payment instruments such as smartcards that can be used across a region and on services offered by different providers. Although the current fare systems make travel easier and more convenient, they are complex and can be challenging to implement. This webinar describes the research on two Transit Cooperative Research Program (TCRP) reports – *TCRP Synthesis 125 on Multiagency Electronic Fare Payment Systems* and *TCRP Report 177 Preliminary Strategic Analysis of Next Generation Fare Payment Systems for Public Transportation*.

### **Connected and Autonomous Vehicles NCHRP/AASHTO Survey**

Open through May 15

The 11<sup>th</sup> survey in NCHRP/AASHTO's continuing *Snapshots of Planning Practices* series is now available. The survey explores the topics of how states and regions are planning for connected and autonomous vehicles. **Prior snapshots** have addressed issues such as: freight, bike/ped, operations, scenario planning, innovative long range planning, crash data, and integrated planning.

### **Quantifying Vehicle Miles Traveled**

May 24, 10:00 – 11:30 AM PT

New state and local policies have created the need for vehicle miles traveled (VMT) estimation methods to evaluate the potential VMT – and associated greenhouse gas – impacts of proposed land use projects. Many VMT estimation methods are available today, ranging from regional travel demand models to spreadsheet-based calculations. This has left practitioners with an open question as to which method to use for a particular project and little empirical information to guide their decision. This webinar will discuss a selection of sketch VMT estimation methods that are available and use case study projects to evaluate the results, applicability, data needs, and practical considerations of each method. Following this presentation will be a discussion of the application of VMT quantification tools to current policy in California.

### **NARC RFI! NARC Seeks Cooperative Procurement Partner for AFVs in the Private Sector**

Submission Deadline: June 2

The purpose of this Request for Information (RFI) is to facilitate a process to gauge interest from trade associations or other agencies that have a national membership base or the capacity to reach a national target audience to create a cooperative procurement program that includes alternative fuel vehicles (AFVs). The target audience is private sector fleets, or the commercial market. The **Fleets for the Future** (F4F) project, led by NARC, currently includes a national-scale public sector procurement initiative for AFVs along with fleet services, parts, and equipment.

### **NARC EVENT! 51st Annual Conference & Exhibition**

June 4-7 - Monterey, CA

Join NARC and the California Association of Councils of Governments for NARC's 51st Annual Conference and Exhibition, which focuses on promoting effective regional cooperation and solutions through interaction and education.

**Infrastructure Carbon Estimator (ICE) Tool Webinar**

June 8, 2:00 – 3:30 PM ET

FHWA presenters will introduce and demonstrate FHWA's Infrastructure Carbon Estimator (ICE), a spreadsheet tool that estimates the lifecycle energy and greenhouse gas emissions from the construction and maintenance of transportation facilities. The Estimator requires limited data inputs and is designed to inform planning and pre-engineering analysis.

**CONTACT US**

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