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NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF REGIONAL COUNCILS

May 8, 2014

Transportation Thursdays

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[ADMINISTRATIVE BRIEF](#) [LEGISLATIVE BRIEF](#)

[REGIONAL BRIEF](#) [OPPORTUNITY BRIEF](#)



ADMINISTRATIVE BRIEF

NARC Releases Summary of *GROW AMERICA Act*. On Tuesday, April 29, 2014, the U.S. Department of Transportation sent to Congress the *GROW AMERICA Act*, the Administration's federal surface transportation reauthorization bill. The bill is a four-year, \$302 billion plan that provides increased funding and authority to local governments and their metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs). The proposal includes:

- A new Transportation Trust Fund (TTF), which includes the Highway Trust Fund (HTF) and various new programs.
- A one-time infusion of \$150 billion in general revenues to both cover the anticipated shortfall in the TTF and increases total

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Chair, Transportation
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funding by roughly \$90 billion over four years, offset by new revenues raised from corporate tax reform.

- Existing and new competitive grant programs, such as *Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery* (TIGER) and *Fixing an Accelerating Surface Transportation* (FAST).
- Increased share of the Surface Transportation Program and Transportation Alternative Funds to “high-performing” MPOs.

Click **[HERE](#)** to read NARC’s summary of MPO-relevant sections of the bill; a detailed analysis is forthcoming. Click **[HERE](#)** to read NARC’s press release concerning the bill.

Secretary Foxx Testifies before Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation: Yesterday, U.S. Secretary of Transportation Anthony Foxx gave testimony regarding the reauthorization of surface transportation programs, and the Administration’s recently released surface transportation reauthorization proposal, the *GROW AMERICA Act*. Secretary Foxx began by stressing the urgency of this year’s transportation reauthorization, given the looming HTF shortfall. He indicated that the highway account will not make it through the summer; the transit account will be insolvent by October. Without a solution, Foxx indicated that transportation projects will have to be slowed or stopped. In regard to the reauthorization proposal, Foxx highlighted that the proposal would increase overall investment and system safety, improve freight and project delivery, and better connect communities. The hearing can be found **[HERE](#)**.

LEGISLATIVE BRIEF

Senate Transportation Bill Coming Next Week: The Senate Environment and Public Works (EPW) committee is poised to release on Monday its version of transportation authorization legislation. The EPW committee will hold a markup of the bill on Thursday, May 15 at 10:00am ET. We’ll share more details as we learn them.

Senate Finance Committee Considers Transportation Funding Options: The Senate Finance Committee this week held a hearing to consider how to fund the nation’s highway and transit systems in future years. This conversation is especially important because the nation’s transportation checking account – the HTF – is facing insolvency by the

end of summer and has too few deposits from fuel taxes to cover even current spending levels. Perhaps most striking was the testimony delivered by Dr. Joseph Kile, Assistant Director for Microeconomic Studies Division at the Congressional Budget Office, who spelled out in stark terms the options facing Congress over the next decade:

- Reduce spending to match expected gas tax receipts. This would require NO new obligations for one year to allow the HTF accounts to “catch up;” after which spending from the highway account would be cut 30% and from the transit account by 65%.
- Increase revenue. Other options exist, but the most likely – a gas tax increase – would have to be 10 to 15 cents per gallon to maintain current spending.
- Continue to transfer funds from the Treasury. As it has done for several years now, Congress would have to transfer \$18 billion in fiscal year 2015 and \$13-18 billion each year after to keep the HTF solvent.

To watch this hearing and read various testimony, click [HERE](#). To read Dr. Kile’s testimony, click [HERE](#).

House Appropriations Subcommittee Passes \$52 Billion

Transportation and Housing Spending Bill: The transportation, housing and urban development (THUD) bill passed the House Appropriations subcommittee yesterday. The bill cuts *TIGER* competitive grants by \$500 million to \$100 million and reduces the list of qualifying projects; cuts deeply the Essential Air Service (EAS) program; and reduces overall resources for transportation by approximately \$1.1 billion. Click [HERE](#) for additional information about the bill.

REGIONAL BRIEF

"Transportation Planning on the Go" Video: While NARC was in Florida recently meeting with the Florida MPO Advisory Council, they pointed us to a video made by a group of students rapping about the MPO and planning process. Titled “Transportation Planning on the Go,” this is a great (and fun) example of how our issues might speak to the next generation of planners and transportation users. If you want to see the video for yourself, go [HERE](#).

OPPORTUNITY BRIEF

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

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. Click [HERE](#) for a draft agenda, hotel reservation and registration information. Two days of transportation tracks are planned (on Monday and Tuesday) - we encourage all MPOs to attend these sessions. We look forward to your participation in Louisville!

WEBINAR: Planning Emphasis Areas (PEAs) for Federal Fiscal Year 2015

June 11, 1:00 PM ET

TO THE ATTENTION OF: Executive Directors of Metropolitan Planning Organizations

The upcoming Transportation Planning Information Exchange is sponsored by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Office of Planning and Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Office of Planning and Environment. Speakers from the FHWA and the FTA will provide information on Planning Emphasis Areas (PEAs). The presentation and discussion will be followed by a question and answer session. If you have specific questions that you would like to submit to the presenters in advance of the webinar, please send them to Harlan Miller

at harlan.miller@dot.gov or Ken Cervenka

at kenneth.cervenka@dot.gov. Click [HERE](#) to register.

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