



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF REGIONAL COUNCILS

TRANSPORTATION THURSDAYS

CONGRESS BRIEF

EPW Passes DRIVE Act

Last week, the Senate Environment and Public Works (EPW) Committee passed out of committee – in a 20-0 vote – a transportation authorization proposal called the *Developing a Reliable and Innovative Vision for the Economy (DRIVE) Act (S. 1647)*. The DRIVE Act is a six-year bill, which would comprise the Highway Title of comprehensive transportation legislation, with \$278 billion in contract authority for fiscal years 2016 to 2021. This is an increase of more than \$16 billion over baseline (current) funding as estimated by Congressional Budget Office, and would require the Senate Finance Committee to find \$80 billion to fund just this portion of the surface transportation program. The Banking Committee is responsible for the transit title, which will further drive up the amount that Finance will be required to find to fund a comprehensive package. Click [HERE](#) for a bill overview, focused on the issues most crucial for NARC’s members.

- Click [HERE](#) for NARC’s section-by-section analysis of the entire bill.
- NARC’s Redline version of the most critical sections of U.S. Code the bill would impact: [STP](#) | [TAP](#) | [Planning Regulations](#).
- Click [HERE](#) for the full text of the bill (note: the amendments made to the bill are not included in this version of the bill, but are reflected in NARC’s section-by-section analysis)

NARC is also hosting a call to discuss the bill next Tuesday. See details in Opportunities section.

Senate Committee Approves Railroad Reform Bill

The Senate Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee this week approved the *Railroad Reform, Enhancement, and Efficiency Act*, to improve freight and passenger rail safety and reauthorize Amtrak at \$1.65 billion annually. The bill authorizes nearly \$570 million each year for a streamlined competitive grant program to assist with Positive Train Control implementation, grade-crossing improvements, workforce development, and research. It also requires all passenger rail agencies to install inward and outward-facing cameras in operating controller cab cars to aid in post-incident investigations, a move motivated by the recent Amtrak crash in Philadelphia.

More Help for Rail Crossings

Representative Rick Larsen (D-WA) recently introduced the *At-Grade Crossing Enhancement Act of 2015 (HR 2933)*, which would authorize \$300 million annually to establish “local rail facilities and safety programs to award grants for freight capacity projects...” A grant could be used for a capital project that mitigates the impacts of rail infrastructure and operations on a local community, including rail line relocation and improving the safety of or eliminating hazards and highway-rail grade crossing; a capital project to improve short-line infrastructure; or training and technical assistance. Local governments and MPOs, among others, would be eligible funding recipients.

House T&I Pulls Back FAA Reauthorization

Earlier this week, the House Transportation and Infrastructure (T&I) Committee announced it would introduce its Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) reauthorization proposal, raising a few eyebrows about whether this was even allowed with the House in pro-forma session for the July 4th recess. So their release plan was changed to a “discussion draft” of the bill, with formal introduction once the House is back in session. But alas, that didn’t happen either. Committee leadership cited scheduling conflicts. No schedule has been announced as to when the bill will be released.

ADMINISTRATION BRIEF

FHWA Issues Memo on Appropriate Uses of PL Funds

Ken Petty, Director of FHWA’s Office of Planning, recently shared with NARC a memo sent to the planning staff at all of FHWA’s division offices. The memo outlines appropriate uses of metropolitan planning (PL) funding, and was issued in response to recent requests from MPOs seeking to stretch the use of PL funds to additional areas of work. The memo is too long to include in full in this newsletter, but you can find a copy of it [HERE](#).

USDOT Releases Fact Sheet on Connected Vehicles and ITS for Planners

Submitted by Mike Pina, ITS JPO

The US Department of Transportation’s (USDOT) Intelligent Transportation Systems Joint Program Office (ITS JPO) has developed a new fact sheet encouraging planning agencies to consider how their local transportation systems will function in a connected vehicle environment. Connected vehicle technology enables cars to wirelessly communicate with each other, roadside infrastructure, and even personal mobile devices, sharing valuable information that could save lives, reduce congestion, and lessen the impact of transportation on our environment.

The *Planning for the Future of Transportation: Connected Vehicles and ITS* fact sheet provides a quick overview of the ITS JPO’s connected vehicle research activities and highlights key elements of performance-based planning and programming (PBPP) that present opportunities for addressing this connected vehicle environment. These PBPP elements include: Strategic Direction (Where do we want to go?), Planning Analysis (How are we going to get there?), Programming (What will it take?), and Implementation and Evaluation (How did we do?)

The fact sheet also provides information on available planning tools and connected vehicle and ITS resources. [Download the fact sheet.](#)

USDOT also developed an animated video to illustrate the concept of connected vehicles and help the public understand its potential benefits. The new animated video shows connected vehicles in action, moving through several scenarios that highlight the technology’s benefits in safety, mobility, environment, road weather, and emergency response. The video illustrates how anonymous data from connected vehicles will be collected and used as the basis for a myriad of applications, such as:

- **Emergency Electronic Brake Light Warning** – Notifies the driver when an out-of-sight vehicle, several cars ahead, is braking.
- **Road Weather Motorist Warning** – Issues alerts and advisories to travelers about deteriorating road and weather conditions on specific roadway segments.
- **Eco-Approach and Departure at Signalized Intersections** – Provides information to drivers about traffic signal timing, allowing drivers to adapt their speed so they pass the signal on green or decrease speed to a stop in the most eco-friendly way possible.
- **Incident Zone Warning** – Alerts drivers to incidents ahead, warning them to slow down and change lanes; also, alerts first responders at the scene about approaching vehicles that pose a danger to them.
- **Queue Warning** – Monitors traffic data to detect stretches of slow-moving traffic and warn motorists to reduce speeds to avoid potential rear-end collisions.
- **Connection Protection** – Gives passengers real-time transit information so they can more accurately predict whether they will make their next connection. If multiple people on a delayed bus will miss their next connection, transportation providers can adjust bus

departures to enable the passengers to make their next connection.

- **Mobile Accessible Pedestrian Signal System** – Sends an “automated pedestrian call” from the smart phone of a pedestrian with disabilities to the traffic controller, holding the walk signal until the pedestrian has cleared the crosswalk. Also, alerts drivers of the presence of a pedestrian with disabilities at the crosswalk.

Connected vehicles will be on our roads sooner than you think. The technology will transform our transportation system as we know it and unleash tremendous benefits for generations to come.

[Download the Video.](#)

REGIONS BRIEF

Oregon Opens Enrollment for Road Usage Charge Program

Oregon is the recognized leader in the implementation of a vehicle miles traveled (VMT) fee, an idea that some believe may be the replacement for the current per gallon fuel charges in place at the federal and state levels. Oregon's project, which has included the implementation of several pilot programs, surpassed another milestone this week when the Oregon DOT launched the first phase of their road usage fee program, OReGO. OReGO is not a pilot program, per se, but will allow 5,000 voluntary cars or light-duty vehicle drivers to opt into the VMT fee and opt out of the fuel tax. These drivers will be charged 1.5 cents per mile traveled and credited back the fuel tax payments. Many eyes are on this program to see how successful it proves to be.

TPB Celebrates 50 Years as MPO for Nation's Capital

The National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board (TPB) celebrated a significant milestone this past week, celebrating fifty years since its federal designation as an MPO in 1965. The TPB, in partnership with the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (MWCOCG), has been a trailblazer in addressing federal standards and integrating transportation considerations into diverse planning aspects such as land use, public health, and emergency response.

JOBS

[View full list of jobs!](#)

Senior Socioeconomic Modeler

Houston-Galveston Area Council, Houston, TX

SBA Credit Administrator

Houston-Galveston Area Council, Houston, TX

Quality Assurance Analyst

Houston-Galveston Area Council, Houston, TX

Diversion and Enhanced Community Coordinator

Alamo Area Council of Governments, San Antonio, TX

Principal Management Analyst

Atlanta Regional Commission, Atlanta, GA

Associate Modeler

Puget Sound Regional Council, Seattle, WA

Director

Wichita Area Metropolitan Planning Organization, Wichita, KS

OPPORTUNITIES

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

[NARC Call! Discussion on Senate EPW DRIVE Act](#)

July 7, 3:00 – 4:00 PM ET

NARC Transportation Director Erich Zimmermann will discuss the major provisions of the *Developing a Reliable and Innovative Vision for the Economy (DRIVE) Act*, a transportation funding authorization recently proposed by the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee.

Innovative Financing: Filling the Infrastructure Pothole

July 8, 10:00 – 11:00 AM ET

The Bipartisan Policy Center will host this in-person discussion with Senators John Hoeven (R-ND) and Ron Wyden (D-OR) regarding their proposed *Move America Act*, a bipartisan bill that introduces an additional federal infrastructure financing tool. Senators Hoeven and Wyden will present their views on the role the federal government can play in financing infrastructure investments.

New Tools and Available Funds for Innovative and Emerging MPOs

July 8, 3:00 – 4:00 PM ET

The Innovative MPO guidebook developed by Transportation for America (T4America) presents a range of current and suggested best practices for MPO staff, board members, and civic leaders. T4America compliments this guidebook with a webinar series to help stakeholders take advantage of the resources presented in the guidebook. This third webinar in the series will examine funding opportunities created by the proposed Senate DRIVE Act for MPOs, discuss how the Maricopa Association of Governments has used data analyses to measure the performance of their transportation investments, and present an approach to planning called creative place-making.

NPMRDS Quarterly Webinar

August 5, 1:00 – 3:00 PM ET

The National Performance Measures Research Data Set (NPMRDS) contains data that the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) uses to make analyses of freight and passenger transportation, and is now available to states and MPOs. This webinar hosted by FHWA's Office of Freight Management and Operations will provide an overview of the data set and demonstrate how to use the data for analyses.

NARC Conference! Becoming Your Best: Professional Development Training for Executive Directors

August 9-11, Austin, TX

Join NARC and the National Association of Development Organizations (NADO) for the 2015 Professional Development Training for Executive Directors conference in Austin, TX. At the first ever Professional Development Training for Executive Directors conference put on by NARC and NADO, you will have the opportunity to network, share best practices, and explore opportunities for strengthening professional capacity and development. You won't want to miss it!

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