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NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF REGIONAL COUNCILS

July 17, 2014

Transportation Thursdays

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executive directors' conference
september 21 - september 24, 2014
des moines, ia

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ADMINISTRATIVE BRIEF

NFAC Releases Freight Recommendations: This week, NARC attended the National Freight Advisory Council (NFAC) public meeting. NFAC was established in MAP-21 to provide advice and recommendations to the U.S. Secretary of Transportation on matters related to freight transportation in the U.S. In concert with the public hearing, NFAC released a report detailing 81 recommendations to the Secretary, including suggestions to improve safety and security across the freight rail network, highlight funding needs and challenges, call for increased streamlining processes, and better collection of data. NFAC's full report can be found [HERE](#). In addition, you can read a list of questions used to guide NFAC's discussion about freight reauthorization proposals during the meeting [HERE](#).

Governments

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President Announces *Build America Investment Initiative*: Today, President Obama announced the launch of the *Build America Investment Initiative*, a new executive action intended to increase private investment in the nation's transportation system. As part of the initiative, the Administration will create the Build America Transportation Investment Center – housed at the U.S. Department of Transportation (U.S. DOT) – to encourage greater partnership between state and local governments, public and private developers, and investors seeking to implement innovative transportation financing tools. The center will include a “navigator service” that will provide support, advice, and expertise related to federal credit programs; improved access to U.S. DOT credit programs; technical assistance; and permitting assistance in an effort to reduce delay. Click **[HERE](#)** for the White House fact sheet.

FTA Hosts *Bus Ladders of Opportunity Initiative Webinar*:

Yesterday, the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) hosted a webinar covering Section 5309 *Bus and Bus Facilities Ladders of Opportunity Initiative* Notice of Funding Opportunity. The webinar provided an overview of the opportunity, potential applicants, eligibility requirements, evaluation criteria, and application form requirements. Click **[HERE](#)** to access the information provided during the webinar, and **[HERE](#)** for additional FTA resources regarding the initiative.

LEGISLATIVE BRIEF

Senate May Take Up House HTF Bill Next Week: With only two weeks until the federal Highway Trust Fund (HTF) becomes insolvent, U.S. Senate is acting on a bill the U.S. House of Representatives passed last week (see next article). Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-NV) sent a “hotlining” request on the House bill, allowing for a unanimous consent agreement to bring the bill up for debate. If no Senators object, the bill could be on the floor early next week. Only five amendments would be allowed, including one from Sen. Boxer (D-CA) to shorten the duration of the extension and one by Sen. Lee (R-UT) related to devolution of the program. The underlying bill and all of the five amendments will require 60 votes to pass. If the underlying bill passes without amendment, the bill will go straight to the President. Click **[HERE](#)** for bill text.

House Passes Short-Term HTF Solution: Last week, House Ways and Means Committee passed a stopgap bill (H.R. 5021 – *Highway and Transportation Funding Act of 2014*) to extend HTF solvency until May 31, 2015. The one-time \$10.8 billion measure transfers \$8.8 billion to the

Highway Account (including \$1 billion from the Leaking Underground Storage Tank (LUST) Trust Fund) and \$2 billion to the Mass Transit Account, offset by pension smoothing provisions and extension of Customs user fees. The bill passed with bipartisan support 367-55. The White House publicly endorsed the House's version.

REGIONAL BRIEF

WMATA Receives GOLD Award for Safety: Last month, the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) in Washington, D.C. received an American Public Transportation Association (APTA) GOLD award for safety in the heavy rail category. The award comes after four years of safety improvements. Click [HERE](#) to see the other winners.

MEMBER REQUEST

The Wasatch Front Regional Council (WFRC) in Salt Lake City, Utah is working with local partner agencies to evaluate the benefits of local transportation projects. Specifically, WFRC is looking for studies or methodologies used in other regions -- including economic, financial, engineering analyses, and/ or communications materials -- that have evaluated the benefits associated with the development of transportation projects. The studies and other materials can broadly consider new/ improved facilities or maintenance/ preservation/ operations for roads, trails, etc. The benefits include not only traditional transportation metrics such as travel time or infrastructure condition, but also economic development, air quality, and quality of life.

Please forward any feedback to Anna Rosenbaum, anna@narc.org.

OPPORTUNITY BRIEF

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

SURVEY: Snapshot of Planning Practices

July 18 - Response deadline is tomorrow!

Just a reminder that the third survey in AASHTO's Standing Committee on Planning *Snapshot of Planning Practices*, is now available and awaiting your response. If you have not already done so, please

complete this brief on-line survey to share your knowledge and experiences on the use of Scenario Planning in state and regional planning efforts. The survey should take approximately 15 minutes to complete. One survey per agency. Click [HERE](#) to take the survey. Click [HERE](#) for previous snapshots on freight and long-range planning.

NARC-HOSTED WEBINAR: Monthly Reauthorization Discussion

July 30, 1:00 – 2:00 PM ET

With the current transportation authorization - MAP-21 - set to expire at the end of September, there is a lot happening on the Hill to prepare for the next authorization bill. NARC has been meeting with transportation staff in the House, Senate, and the Administration. Come with ideas and questions; there will be time at the end for an open, virtual discussion. Space is limited. Click [HERE](#) to reserve your spot.

GRANT: Capital Investment Program: New Starts, Small Starts, and Core Capacity Improvements

Deadline: September 10

FTA has published updated reporting instructions and templates on its website for project sponsors of proposed *Capital Investment* grant projects. These documents inform projects sponsors of the information that must be provided to FTA for the legislatively required evaluation and rating of the project. Project sponsors wishing for their project to be considered for a funding recommendation in the President's upcoming FY16 budget (to be published in February 2015) must submit information to FTA for project evaluation and rating no later than **September 10, 2014**. Please contact the FTA Office of Planning and Environment with any questions at 202-366-4033. Click [HERE](#) for additional information and to apply.

WEBINAR: Scenario Planning Applications for Freight Transportation

September 11, 1:00 PM ET

This webinar, led by the FHWA Office of Freight Management & Operations and the FHWA Office of Planning, will explore the use of scenario planning as a way to inform freight infrastructure and supply chain management activities and investments. Scenario planning is an analytical process that can help public and private sector transportation professionals plan for the future and better understand what changes might happen in the future. Agencies are increasingly finding value in applying the principles of scenario planning to freight transportation planning and decision-making. Click [HERE](#) to register.

PUBLICATION: "Rural Connections: Challenges and Opportunities in America's Heartland"

America's rural heartland is home to nearly 50 million people, and its natural resources provide the energy, food and fiber that support the nation's economy and way of life. But, a new report finds that the nation's rural transportation system, which is critical to the nation's booming agriculture, energy and tourism sectors, is in need of modernization to address deficient roads and bridges, high crash rates and inadequate connectivity and capacity. The report, "Rural Connections: Challenges and Opportunities in America's Heartland," was released July 10 by TRIP, a national non-profit transportation research group based in Washington, D.C. It defines Rural America as counties that lack an urban area of at least 50,000 in population or lack a large commuting flow to an urban county. Click [HERE](#) for additional information and to read the report.

NARC CONFERENCE: Executive Directors' Conference

September 21 - 24; Des Moines, IA

Join the Des Moines Area Metropolitan Planning Organization and NARC for the 2014 Executive Directors' Conference in Des Moines, IA.

Click [HERE](#) to register today!

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