



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF REGIONAL COUNCILS

TRANSPORTATION THURSDAYS

CONGRESS BRIEF

Debate Has Begun

The Senate voted yesterday to proceed the debate on a transportation reauthorization bill. The combined package maintains the moniker of the "DRIVE Act" moniker, the name given to it by the EPW Committee (which deals primarily with roads). Despite its single-mode title, the bill contains funding for transit, transportation safety, bicycles, pedestrians, planning, and roads and bridges. A whirlwind process led to creation of the bill. The transit title, under the purview of the Banking Committee, was never marked up and no hearings were held to assist in its creation. The Commerce Committee only recently passed its bill, on a strictly party-line vote. And the Finance Committee piece of the puzzle, which is what funds the whole operation, was revealed only when the entire package was introduced. This chaotic approach resulted in a 1,000 page bill, and most Senators didn't receive a copy until about an hour before the first cloture vote, which failed. A second cloture vote yesterday was successful, so debate began. You can find the most recent version of the bill [HERE](#).

STP Amendment

Senators Wicker and Booker have filed their amendment ([#2289](#)) to increase the overall funding for STP and increase the share of STP that is distributed by population. The result of these changes would provide local areas with an additional \$1 billion in STP in the first year of the legislation compared to the existing base bill. It is vital that this amendment be accepted, because the base bill actually represents a *decrease* in STP funding distributed to local areas. **NARC requests that you reach out to the Senate and tell them you support this amendment.** We don't know the schedule for consideration yet, but you can start calling or emailing anyway. A list of transportation staff is [HERE](#), complete with emails and phone numbers. We've also prepared a sample letter on this issue [HERE](#), which you can modify as you'd like to make it specific to your region. To see the impact of the amendment on metropolitan areas over 200,000 in population, a chart prepared by NARC is [HERE](#).

Bill Analysis

Most importantly, this bill reflects much of what NARC and other local government groups asked for, including: 100% suballocation of TAP, an increased share of STP funding (though this is a hollow victory, which can be turned into a real victory with passage of the Wicker-Booker amendment, as discussed above), funding for on-system, non-NHS bridges, and a fix for the requirement that transit be given a vote on the board of every MPO that represents a TMA.

If you've read [our analysis](#) of the EPW-passed bill, not a whole lot has changed from that version to this final version. The newest version of the bill requires that 50% of the expanded bridge set-aside be obligated to off-system bridges; and allows states to use up to 5% of their "anywhere in the state" STP funding on border-related projects. Otherwise, there aren't a lot of additional changes.

In terms of transit, as mentioned above, we had not seen the transit title until the full package was

released. The good news for transit is that funding increases across the board for all programs. The American Public Transportation Association (APTA) created a helpful chart to outline what the funding is for programs during the life of the bill. You can find that [HERE](#). One important change is a significant increase in funding for the “bus and bus facilities” program, including the creation of a discretionary program. You can find an overview and section-by-section analysis prepared by the Banking Committee [HERE](#). As for the MAP-21 requirement that transit be given voting representation on MPO boards, the Senate bill would fix this by clarifying that this governance change is intended to take place within the existing state enabling statute or MPO by-laws; and that elected officials can wear “two-hats” when it comes to this requirement. We feel that short of removing the requirement all together, this language should reduce dramatically the negative unintended consequences of the requirement, and are please it was included.

More bill analysis as we make our way through the bill.

ADMINISTRATION BRIEF

Emergency Order Remains in Effect for Crude Oil Transporters

USDOT declared it will conduct a rulemaking process to make permanent an Emergency Order regarding rail oil tanker safety. Following a series of petroleum crude oil tank derailments across the country that resulted in significant local impacts, USDOT issued an **emergency order** and the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) and Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA) issued a **safety advisory** in May 2014 as part of a broad strategy to improve rail safety. The emergency order required all railroads that operate trains transporting over a million gallons of Bakken crude oil to notify the State and Tribal Emergency Response Commissions of their movement through each state. The safety advisory strongly advised that crude oil carriers use tank cars of the highest integrity available within their fleets. One year later in May 2015, USDOT announced a **final rule** that extends restrictions and requirements to all high-hazard flammable trains and includes components that enhance braking and tank car standards, reduce operating speeds, and improve the sharing of train routing information. FRA’s Acting Administrator Sarah Feinberg sent a reminder to railroads yesterday that the emergency order is to remain in effect until the rulemaking becomes official.

FHWA Launches Tunnel Inspection Program

Modeled after the National Bridge Inspection Program, the National Tunnel Inspection Standards (**NTIS**) published by FHWA require tunnel owners to inspect tunnels against a uniform set of structural standards and establish methodologies for conducting inspections. To gauge the efficacy of inspections and ensure the safety of tunnel users across the country, NTIS also requires tunnel owners to submit an annual report detailing the condition of their tunnels and inspection results. FHWA will support implementation of these standards by providing inspection training and manuals to tunnel engineers, and will use the results of inspection reports to begin compiling a national tunnel inventory.

REGIONS BRIEF

H-GAC Publishes Guide to Rural Downtown Revitalization

The Houston-Galveston Area Council (H-GAC) released a guide for local governments on how to help communities restore economic growth through the creation of vibrant downtowns, particularly in rural and small urban areas. H-GAC’s *Bringing Back Main Street: A Guide to Downtown Revitalization for Local Governments* highlights successful revitalization efforts implemented by small cities throughout Texas and identifies funding sources that can be used to support this vision.

ECWRPC Receives Federal Funding for ORDIDI

In two extensive cutbacks in 2012 and 2013, the Oshkosh Corporation laid off an estimated 950 Defense Division employees with negative economic impacts reverberating throughout the Oshkosh-Neenah Metropolitan Statistical Area. With the financial support of local partners and a Defense Industry Adjustment grant from the U.S. Department of Defense’s Office of Economic Adjustment (DoD-OEA), the East Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (ECWRPC)

was able to establish the Oshkosh Region Defense Industry Diversification Initiative (**ORDIDI**). The overall objective of the ORDIDI project is to assist companies and communities in the Oshkosh region in expanding new industry clusters that will create resilient economies in the face of defense spending cuts. The DoD-OEA awarded ECWRPC an additional \$188,798 this June to fund special projects under the ongoing ORDIDI, including a charrette education seminar, aerospace cluster study, growth management program, and supply chain mapping.

MAG Elects TPC Chairs

The Maricopa Association of Governments (MAG) held elections for the chair positions of its 23-member Transportation Policy Committee (TPC), which represents the interests of regional cities and towns, Arizona DOT, the private sector, Native American community, and public in developing MAG's transportation policy positions. Glendale Mayor Jerry Weiers and Mesa Mayor John Giles were selected to serve as chair and vice chair of MAG's TPC.

JOBS

[View full list of jobs!](#)

Public Participation Planner -Research Analyst II

Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission, Philadelphia, PA

Principal Transportation Planner – Freight Planning

North Central Texas Council of Governments, Arlington, TX

Transportation Planner – System Performance Safety and Security

Association of Central Oklahoma Governments, Oklahoma City, OK

Transportation Planner – Short Range Planning and Intermodal

Association of Central Oklahoma Governments, Oklahoma City, OK

Environmental Resources Planning Division Director

Capital Area Regional Planning Commission, Madison, WI

OPPORTUNITIES

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

Resources for Evaluating Airport Sustainability Practices

The Transportation Research Board's Airport Cooperative Research Program (ACRP) has conducted research on resources for planning, implementing, sharing, and rating sustainability practices at airports, resulting in an improved Sustainable Aviation Guidance Alliance (SAGA) interactive website and preliminary rating system for airport sustainability. This webinar will teach you how to use the SAGA website to plan and implement sustainable practices and share lessons learned, as well as describe the rating system outlined in ACRP's ***Prototype Airport Sustainability Rating System—Characteristics, Viability, and Implementation Options***.

Building Communities through Transportation: The Role of Placemaking in Transportation Planning

July 29, 2:00 – 3:00 PM ET

Historically, transportation planning has focused on moving people and goods from point A to point B, largely missing the broader goals of the planned urban environment. This webinar hosted by Community Builders will explain the importance of refocusing transportation planning around the concept of placemaking at and between points A and B. The webinar will also offer some low-cost and incremental steps to jump start the creation of safer, more vibrant places by tapping into the talents of local people, entrepreneurs, developers, and city and county staff. Gary Toth of Project for Public Spaces will share examples of solutions to common issues and provide guidance for how communities can build excitement and public support for projects through creative

implementation.

Road Diets: A Proven Safety Countermeasure

August 13, 12:00 – 1:30 PM ET

The Institute of Transportation Engineers will highlight how agencies are using road diets as a low cost safety countermeasure to improve safety, operations, and livability in their communities. Instructors will provide an overview of how Road Diets can be used to develop a safe and efficient transportation system for all users, describe the quality of life improvements associated with Road Diets, and identify consideration factors before implementing a Road Diet.

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!

CONTACT US

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