



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF REGIONAL COUNCILS

TRANSPORTATION THURSDAYS

## CONGRESS BRIEF

*Both chambers are on recess for a seven-week recess period during party conventions and the usual August break. They will return after Labor Day, on September 5.*

### **Senators and Representatives Pen Letter to USDOT on PM<sub>3</sub> NPRM**

This week, more than 50 U.S. Senators and Representatives sent a letter to U.S. Transportation Secretary Anthony Foxx urging USDOT to make changes to its **proposed system performance proposed rule**. Specifically, the letter asks the agency to more accurately assess congestion relief provided by transit, bike lanes, and other modes by evaluating the movement of people, rather than vehicles. The letter also supports a greenhouse gas measure, removing the truck travel time reliability performance measures, and including an accessibility measure.

## ADMINISTRATION BRIEF

### **FHWA Requests Nominations for Alternative Fuel Corridors**

FHWA has issued a **Federal Register Notice** this week inviting state and local officials to nominate national electric vehicle (EV) charging, hydrogen, propane, and natural gas fueling corridors. The Secretary of Transportation is required by Section 1413 of the FAST Act to solicit and designate these zero emission and alternative fuel corridors along major highways to improve the mobility of passenger and commercial alternative fuel vehicles. Any state or local agency is invited to submit nominations for corridors in their areas by August 22.

### **FTA Issues Transit Asset Management (TAM) Rule**

On Tuesday, FTA issued a final Transit Asset Management Rule that requires FTA transit agency grantees to develop management plans for their public transportation assets. Every transit provider supported by FTA will inventory and assess the condition of their assets, develop investment priorities, and establish performance targets as required by the rule. FTA also released two proposed TAM guidebooks that are open for a 60-day comment period that detail methods for measuring and reporting for the National Transit Database.

### **Supporting Performance-Based Planning and Programming through Scenario Planning**

This recently released guidebook from FHWA focuses on how scenario planning can support performance-based planning and programming (PBPP). The guidebook presents a framework for connecting scenario planning with the four phases of PBPP and includes three case studies of agencies that have used scenario planning in innovative ways to advance PBPP. A review of scenario planning tools is also included in an appendix.

### **USDOT Announces \$55 Million in Grants to Transit Agencies to Deploy Clean Buses**

FTA has released the project selections for their \$55 million **Low or No Emission (Low-No) Bus Competitive Grant Program**. The awardees include 20 transit providers in 13 states who will each get a share of the \$55 million available. The program helps agencies replace diesel buses with battery-electric or fuel cell-powered vehicles which generate low or no emissions and help reduce air pollution and lessen reliance on fossil fuels. Funding for the program was established under MAP-21 but was more than doubled in the FAST Act.

## **Democratic Party Platform**

The official 2016 Democratic Party platform emphasizes their commitment to increasing federal investment of infrastructure and transportation that creates jobs for the middle class and improves roads, bridges, airports, passenger and freight rail lines, and public transit. The platform also supports expanding broadband networks and modernizing energy and water systems. To fund these improvements, Democrats would create an independent, national infrastructure bank that provides loans and financial assistance for a variety of projects, reauthorize the Build America Bonds program, and continue the interest tax exemption on municipal bonds. The party platform also includes a section on creating a clean energy economy that would reduce oil consumption and use cleaner fuels and alternative vehicles in addition to investing in public transit and bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure. By focusing on clean energy, Democrats hope to reduce methane emissions from all oil and gas production and transportation to at least 40 to 45 percent below 2005 levels by 2025. The platform also touches on building strong cities with new infrastructure investments and fighting against climate change.

## **REGIONS BRIEF**

### **SEMCOG: \$6.2 Million Investment to Improve Regional Trail Network**

The Southeast Michigan Council of Governments (SEMCOG) has awarded over \$6.2 million in Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) funds to 15 projects across the seven county region. TAP funds can be used for a variety of projects that improve the transportation system and provide safe alternative transportation options. The selected projects include improvements such as expanding trail connectivity for pedestrians and bicyclists and installing streetscape to a downtown district. These regional transportation investments help support implementation of SEMCOG's green infrastructure and bicycle and pedestrian plans and improve overall quality of life in their region.

### **NARC President Shaffer Attends USDOT Roundtable**

NARC President Ron Shaffer was among a group of NARC members that joined U.S. Transportation Secretary Anthony Foxx for a White House meeting on MPOs and their role in the fabric of communities. Secretary Foxx served on the board of his MPO when he was mayor of Charlotte, NC.

The July 12 roundtable called by Secretary Foxx included local elected officials, MPO officials, and others to focus on how USDOT could better tap into the potential of MPOs to enhance transportation dollars and meet local needs. Foxx noted that a heavier reliance on MPO decision-making and increased funding could lead to stronger communities. While Foxx said that the timing of the meeting was coincidental to the release of the Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM) on MPO consolidation, some NARC members raised the issue as a concern.

MPO leaders highlighted the innovative work of regional organizations as a whole and the broader community issues that they work on, such as economic development, land use planning, and the shift to more transit solutions. A recording of the meeting will be available soon.

## **JOBS**

*[View full list of jobs!](#)*

### **Senior Transportation Planner**

Springfield-Sangamon County Regional Planning Commission, Springfield, IL

### **Assistant or Associate Regional Planner**

San Joaquin Council of Governments, Stockton, CA

### **Director of Senior and Disability Services**

Rogue Valley Council of Governments, Central Point, OR

## **OPPORTUNITIES**

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

### **Transportation Asset Management Final Rule Webinar Series**

July 26 – August 18

FTA will host a multi-part webinar series between Tuesday, July 26-Thursday, August 18 to provide technical assistance to the transit industry on how to implement the Transit Asset Management rule.

### **Quarterly Technical Assistance Webinar for the NPMRDS**

August 9, 1:00 – 3:00 PM ET

The National Performance Management Research Data Set (NPMRDS) is the probe data that FHWA is using internally for passenger and freight analysis and making available to States and MPOs. At this webinar, FHWA and its contractors will provide an overview of the probe data set, demonstrate data applications, and respond to technical assistance questions. This webinar is open to USDOT, state DOT, MPO, academic, and private sector participants.

### **TMIP Webinar: Assembling a Metropolitan Transportation Model from MSA to TAZ**

August 10, 2:00 – 3:30 PM ET

This presentation will describe the data and methods used by Metroplan, the Little Rock regional MPO, to develop transportation models since the middle 1990's. Metroplan uses spreadsheet templates to project population and employment at the regional level, then methodically refines it downward into TAZ-level inputs for population, household size, vehicles available, employment by industry, and other characteristics. The data sets available have grown exponentially in recent years, while software, data-processing and presentation capabilities have also improved, yet good-quality human judgment remains decisive. This presentation will conclude with an open-ended discussion on ways different agencies can share ideas and skills to meet the modeling challenge.

### **ITE 2016 International Annual Meeting & Exhibit**

August 14 – 17, Anaheim, CA

The 2016 Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE) Annual Meeting and Exhibit is about embracing the rapid change occurring in the transportation profession, meeting the challenges of new models and technologies, and being ready to take advantage of the immense opportunity offered by this new era. Leave Anaheim feeling energized and renewed to successfully achieve your current responsibilities, tackle your most daunting challenges, and confidently seek out new endeavors.

### **NARC Event! NARC's 2016 Executive Directors Conference and Board Retreat**

September 18-21 – South Bend, IN

Join NARC and the Michiana Area Council of Governments for the 2016 Executive Directors Conference in South Bend, Indiana. This intimate conference brings executive directors, deputy directors, and senior staff together to network, share best practices, and explore opportunities for strengthening professional capacity and development. We will discuss topics ranging from human resources and succession planning to what's new on the technological horizon. This year's conference will start with a reception on Sunday evening and end with the Board of Directors Retreat on Wednesday. The Board Dinner will be Tuesday evening, time and location TBD. **Note:** *Please plan to arrive on Sunday, September 18 as we will not have hotel rooms available on Saturday night.*

### **The Big Jump Project**

Applications Due: October 28

Building on the momentum of the Green Lane Project, The Big Jump will put bikes at the center of connecting people to the places where they live, learn, work and play. Through a mix of on-the-ground infrastructure, smart outreach and community engagement, The Big Jump will partner with community leaders in the U.S. to identify opportunities for improvements specifically tailored to each community's needs. The Big Jump Project is a three-year effort to help 10 places achieve a big jump in biking – a doubling or tripling of people riding – by building a network of safe and comfortable places to ride and engaging the community. The goal is also to validate a core concept: that if a city does all the right things, more people will ride and the community will be a better place to live, work and play. The Big Jump team is looking for 10 places that will achieve great things for biking between now and 2020.

**CONTACT US**

