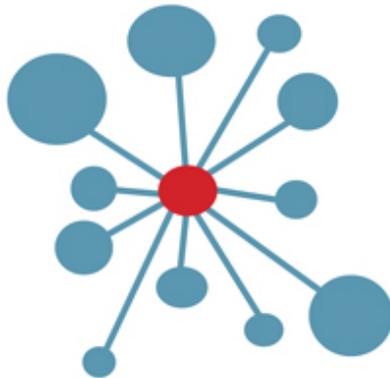




NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF REGIONAL COUNCILS

TRANSPORTATION THURSDAYS



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## CONGRESS BRIEF

### Concerns About Local Transportation Funding

The House transportation appropriations bill would rescind unobligated contract authority of \$800 million from most programs funded through the transportation authorization bill, the FAST Act. An amendment by Representative Rob Woodall (R-GA), which was accepted by voice vote, is a double whammy. First, it removes a long-standing exemption for suballocated Surface Transportation Block Grant Program (STBGP) dollars from being rescinded. The current exemption prevents states from rescinding the small portion of the program directly provided to local areas with populations greater than 200,000. Second, the Woodall amendment eliminates a requirement that states meet their rescission target by drawing down existing unobligated balances in a proportional manner, so that one or two accounts do not bear greater burden. This change would potentially impact any MPO that receives STBGP, CMAQ, Transportation Alternatives, or PL funds.

In short, the Woodall amendment gives states much broader authority to use unobligated contract authority that is otherwise directed to local areas – including planning funds to MPOs – to meet their share of the rescission. This would potentially reverse the modest gains made in the FAST Act to boost local funding, and put at least some share of your STBGP, CMAQ, Transportation Alternatives, and PL funding at risk.

This move is problematic for the direct impacts of lost unobligated funds, of course, but also for what it would represent. Just a few short years ago, authorizers provided additional funds to local areas through the FAST Act. Now, appropriators may be on the verge of sending a strong signal that their commitment is not to local areas, but to broader state discretion.

The best solution is that no rescission be included in the final agreement. This is a possible outcome, but we are currently not clear how likely it is. We are proceeding as though a rescission will be included. We need to send a message, to both the Senate and House, that language provided in last year's FY17 transportation appropriations bill and the FAST Act – and which was included in the House appropriations bill before the Woodall amendment struck it – be included if there is a rescission this year. The overarching message: don't let states draw down on the very small portion of the overall program that is provided to local areas. These dollars are essential for

the work all of you do, and it needs to be preserved.

### **FAA Expires in Nine Days**

Senate Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee Chairman John Thune (R-SD) stated earlier this week that he is encouraging his House counterparts to extend FAA's authorization for six months. Opponents of House Transportation Committee Chairman Bill Shuster's (R-PA) bill – which includes a plan to privatize the nation's air traffic control system – worry that a shorter extension would give the chairman time to consolidate his support. The House and Senate both return next week and have just a few days to decide before the September 30 deadline.

### **Tax Reform and an Infrastructure Package**

Congressman John Delaney (D-MD) told Bloomberg TV this week that he doesn't think Republicans want to include infrastructure in their tax reform plans. Delaney believes the GOP will not secure a win on tax reform unless Congress can focus on issues both sides can agree, such as infrastructure. He also said that his push to pair infrastructure spending with international tax reform has about 80 supporters from both sides of the aisle.

## **ADMINISTRATION BRIEF**

### **Fight Over GHG Regulations**

California and seven other states filed a complaint with a federal district court yesterday arguing that USDOT unlawfully delayed and suspended an FHWA regulation that would require states to track greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and set emissions targets as part of the overall performance program established in the MAP-21 authorization bill. The requirement was included in the final rule creating measures of system performance under the Obama administration, but has been placed on an indefinite hold by the Trump administration, while the remainder of the rule has been allowed to remain in force. The states argue that without a notice-and-comment process, the suspension of the regulation violates administration law. Iowa, Massachusetts, Maryland, Minnesota, Oregon, Vermont, and Washington joined California in filing the suit.

### **USDOT Announces \$55 Million in Grants to Support High-Tech Low-No Buses**

FTA awarded fifty-one projects across the country as part of the Low or No Emission (Low-No) Vehicle program last week. The program funds the development of transit buses and infrastructure that use advanced fuel technologies. Eligible projects included those that replace, rehabilitate, lease, and purchase buses and related equipment – as well as projects to purchase, rehabilitate, construct, or lease bus-related facilities, such as buildings for bus storage and maintenance.

### **USDOT Announces ATTRI Application Development Awards**

USDOT recently awarded six application development research contracts worth \$6.2 million to improve mobility options for those with disabilities. **According to Census estimates**, nearly 20 percent of the U.S. population has a disability, and USDOT responded by exploring innovative technologies and creative service models to provide more accessibility options. Through the Accessible Transportation Technologies Research Initiative (**ATTRI**), these projects will leverage transformative transportation technology advances in one of three categories: wayfinding and navigation; pre-trip and concierge services; and safe intersection crossing.

### **FAA Works with Florida Drone Operators to Speed Hurricane Recovery**

Following Hurricane Irma, FAA issued 132 airspace authorizations to allow drones to fly into affected areas. The Air National Guard has used drones to survey damage and assess which areas need the most immediate assistance. Drones have also played a role in the private sector by assisting utilities to restore electricity and helping insurance companies act on claims more quickly.

## **REGIONS BRIEF**

### **Major Smart Corridor Project Launches in Atlanta**

Last week, Atlanta Mayor Kasim Reed celebrated the launch of the North Avenue Smart Corridor Demonstration project. The project will use multiple smart technologies to convert data into actionable information to improve the corridor. The technology will prioritize emergency vehicles to improve response time, as well as improve overall flow for all modes through adaptive signal systems.

## JOBS

*View full list of jobs!*

### **Principal Planner, Transportation Planning**

Puget Sound Regional Council, Seattle, WA

### **Economic Development Planner**

Northeast Ohio Four County Regional Planning and Development Organization, Akron, OH

### **Director of Transportation Planning**

Lehigh Valley Planning Commission, Allentown, PA

### **JLUS Project Manager**

Alamo Area Council of Governments, San Antonio, TX

## OPPORTUNITIES

*View full list of grants and events!*

### **TCRP Oversight and Project Selection Committee**

Letters of Interest Due: September 25

The **Transit Cooperative Research Program** (TCRP) Oversight and Project Selection (TOPS) Committee is soliciting letters of interest from those interested in serving on the committee. The TOPS Committee is the independent governing board statutorily designated to oversee TCRP, a cooperative undertaking between the Transportation Research Board, the American Public Transportation Association, and FTA.

Successful candidates will be well-established leaders in public transportation and related fields. Members serve for three years and attend two meetings annually for selecting projects to be undertaken by TCRP and providing oversight and evaluation of the program. Expenses for program participants are paid by the program. Interested persons should provide a letter of interest and a bio to Transit Development Corporation Executive Director Arthur Guzzetti at [aguzzetti@apta.com](mailto:aguzzetti@apta.com) for consideration by the nominating committee.

### **NARC Webinar! Learn About Exclusive Deals on Alt-Fuel Vehicles Through F4F**

**September 26, 1:00-2:00 PM ET**

**October 4, 1:00-2:00 PM ET**

Please join Fleets for the Future (F4F) with National Joint Powers Alliance (NJPA), Zenith Motors, and National Auto Fleet Group (NAFG) to learn about the available clean vehicles provided through NJPA, a leading national purchasing cooperative with over 50,000 members. Vehicles range from plug-in hybrid sedans to propane and natural gas trucks to full electric shuttle buses and cargo vans. Electric vehicle charging infrastructure and associated services are also newly available. In October only, Zenith and NAFG will be offering an additional discount on vehicles through F4F. Join the webinar to learn more about how you can transform your fleet while saving thousands of dollars in the process. There will be a live Q&A session following the presentations where participants can ask vendors questions directly.

### **Resilience Webinar Series**

September 28-November 16, each Thursday, 1:00-2:30 PM ET

FHWA is holding seven webinars on the results of four different resilience-focused projects conducted in cooperation with its state and local partners. FHWA has developed information, examples, and lessons learned on integrating resilience concerns into planning, project development, and project engineering.

## CONTACT US

