



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF REGIONAL COUNCILS

TRANSPORTATION THURSDAYS

CONGRESS BRIEF

Quite a Week in Congress

The sudden resignation announcement late last week of House Speaker John Boehner (R-OH) cleared the way for Congress to pass a continuing resolution (CR) to keep the government open until December 11, so now attention turns to what that means for transportation reauthorization. There has been speculation that Speaker Boehner may deliver a number of “parting gifts” before he leaves his seat at the end of October, including a multi-year transportation bill. Boehner’s departure is timed almost perfectly with the expiration of the current transportation bill extension on October 29, raising hopes that a long-term deal could be in place before another extension is required. If that doesn’t happen, House Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy (R-CA), who is widely expected to replace Boehner as Speaker, has vowed to pass a six-year bill with a tax reform bill tacked on. McCarthy opposes increasing the gas tax.

Meanwhile, congressional tax committee members announced earlier this week that they hope to finish talks by the end of today with a decision on whether to proceed on a plan to use a tax overhaul package to create a one-time revenue boost that will be used to pay for a long-term transportation bill. Meetings between House Ways and Means Committee Chairman Paul Ryan (R-WI) and Senators Chuck Schumer (D-NY) and Rob Portman (R-OH), both on Senate Finance, have been ongoing, but Senate Finance Chairman Orrin Hatch (R-AL) and Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY) have rejected the idea thus far. This has led to some speculation that the House may be open to accepting the package of offsets included in the Senate’s DRIVE Act proposal, which has enough funding for a three-year bill.

No matter which funding package Congress chooses, it is highly unlikely that a final package will be ready before the October 29 expiration. With the Columbus Day holiday coming up, there are only a few legislative days left to complete a package. House Transportation Committee Ranking Member Peter DeFazio (D-OR) expressed pessimism that a bill could be finished before an extension is required, indicating that disagreements over funding are unlikely to be resolved quickly. And with no announced markup of a House bill for next week, they would be into the week of October 20 before anything could happen. This leaves a tiny window to finalize such a large bill with so many moving parts.

ADMINISTRATION BRIEF

NTSB Recommends Federal Oversight of Washington’s Metro

The National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) made an urgent recommendation to Transportation Secretary Anthony Foxx asking for the reclassification of Metro as a commuter railroad under the Federal Railroad Administration. In their statement NTSB cited that Metro’s severe and persistent safety problems need federal oversight with tougher regulations and penalties. Also this week, Barbara Mikulski (D-MD) sponsored a bill giving the Secretary of Transportation sole authority to appoint Federal Directors to the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority Board of Directors.

USDOT Safer People, Safer Streets Update Meeting

Today marks the one-year anniversary of the launch of the USDOT **Safer People, Safer Streets Initiative**. NARC met with USDOT officials and other stakeholders in a roundtable today to discuss progress on the pedestrian and bicycle safety initiative and to identify continuing opportunities to coordinate and elevate pedestrian and bicycle safety activities. This conversation aimed to help frame the next steps of the initiative, which include gathering information on policy effectiveness, identifying policy evaluation gaps, and supporting safer road user behavior and infrastructure planning. One resource developed as part of the initiative, **Bicycle and Pedestrian Funding, Design, and Environmental Review: Addressing Common Misconceptions**, debunks several myths about the federal rules regarding pedestrian and bicycle facilities, and attempts to distinguish between federal standards and state and local practice.

New Innovative Center to Increase Options for Investment in Transportation Infrastructure

USDOT unveiled its new Build America Transportation Investment Center (BATIC) this week as a resource for states, municipalities, and other project sponsors. AASHTO is partnering with USDOT to create the BATIC Institute to help state DOTs and other agencies find financing solutions for transportation projects. The Institute will provide specialized education to leaders and decision-makers online as well as in-person.

FTA Issues Proposed Rule for Transit Agencies to Achieve State of Good Repair, Improve Safety

Yesterday, FTA released a notice of proposed rulemaking that would require public transportation agencies to develop a Transit Asset Management (TAM) Plan to help monitor and manage capital assets and maintain them in a state of good repair. The TAM system was enacted under MAP-21 for FTA and helps transit agencies understand how the condition of their assets may impact safety. This rule is open for public comment through November 30.

Committee Leaders Introduce Positive Train Control Deadline Extension

Following a **letter** to House leadership led by Mike Quigley (D-IL) and Dan Newhouse (R-WA), the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee leaders introduced the *Positive Train Control Enforcement and Implementation Act of 2015* this week. This Act would delay the deadline for Positive Train Control (PTC) technology implementation to the end of 2018 in order to avoid a shutdown of many freight and passenger railroads. Last month a report from the Government Accountability Office also recommended extending the PTC deadline to avoid hardships for service.

REGIONS BRIEF

Hillsborough Metropolitan Planning Organization Wins APA Award

The Hillsborough MPO and Planning Commission won the American Planning Association's (APA) Florida Chapter 2015 Project Award of Merit at the recent Florida conference. Their program, *Imagine 2040*, involved public, private, and inter-agency partnerships as well as innovative planning methods and practices. The program incorporated many different forms of public feedback to recruit nearly 6,000 participants, the most public participation for their organization ever.

JOBS

View full list of jobs!

Request for Proposals: Mountain Accord (Phase II) Program Director

Wasatch Front Regional Council, Salt Lake City, UT

Budget Officer

Alamo Area Council of Governments, San Antonio, TX

OPPORTUNITIES

View full list of grants and events!

NOFA for Ladders of Opportunity Initiative: Pilot On-the-Job-Training Supportive Services Program

Last week, FHWA announced \$3 million in grants for a pilot On-the-Job-Training Supportive Services Program for state DOTs, state agencies, or local governments applying through their state DOT. This Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) is looking for innovative proposals for highway construction workforce development programs that promote avenues to the middle class for American workers and economic growth.

Southwest Florida Freight Summit

October 8, 1:00 – 4:30 PM ET

Over the last several years, Florida has made significant investments in freight and logistics infrastructure and both the Florida DOT and the Lee and Collier MPO have developed freight planning programs. At this summit you can engage with the regional transportation planning community and the private sector logistics industry as well as learn about the programs these organizations have developed.

Call for “Tools of the Trade” Conference Abstracts

Abstracts Due: October 14

The Committee seeks exceptional papers or presentations on transportation planning topics and tools that are applicable to small and medium-sized communities. The conference will be held September 12-14, 2016 in Charleston, South Carolina.

Enabling Technologies for Vehicle Automation

October 14, 2:00 – 4:00 PM ET

Vehicle automation relies heavily on technologies such as wireless communications, positioning, mapping, localization, timing, tracking, and sensing. The Enabling Technologies Project is looking at recent advances in technology primarily covering Positioning, Navigation and Timing (PNT), Mapping, Communications, Sensing and Human Factors. This webinar will share project findings and help develop a clear understanding of current capabilities, limitations, and future directions of AV technologies.

Connecting the Dots- First Steps in Working with Regional Offices

October 15, 3:00 – 4:00 PM ET

Learn about the structure and system of regional offices, how they have worked with local advocates and organizations in the past, and how they plan to engage with you to work on the Surgeon General's Call to Action on Walking and Walkable Communities.

Regional Models of Cooperation – Regional Transit Planning

October 16, 1:00 – 2:30 PM ET

In this FHWA and FTA webinar, representatives from MPOs and regional transit authorities in the Atlanta, Chicago, and Phoenix metropolitan areas will share their experiences making regional transit planning collaboration work across jurisdictional boundaries.

Kansas DOT Administers Federal Funding Exchange to Fund Local Transportation Projects

October 29, 2:00 – 3:30 PM ET

This webinar will discuss how KDOT helps local agencies streamline the process of implementing transportation projects – including projects designed to improve roadway safety – through an innovative program called the Federal Fund Exchange (FFE). FFE gives local agencies the option to swap their federal funds in exchange for state dollars, which helps local agencies save time and money by avoiding some of the more restrictive requirements of the federal aid process.

CONTACT US

