



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF REGIONAL COUNCILS

TRANSPORTATION THURSDAYS

CONGRESS BRIEF

Congress is in recess after the close of business today. Both chambers return October 20.

Palace Intrigue

In a shocking reversal today, House Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy (R-CA) withdrew from the race to replace retiring House Speaker John Boehner (R-OH). McCarthy's decision has thrown the Republican caucus into a state of chaos, with no presumptive "next in line" candidate. Representatives Jason Chaffetz (R-UT) and Daniel Webster (R-FL) both remain candidates for the position, but it is unlikely either can get the necessary 218 votes to become Speaker. Republicans will likely have to find a consensus candidate who can appeal to the conservative wing of the party, and there is already talk of a "caretaker candidate" who would hold the position until the end of the current session and give the caucus time to figure out its next step. It's difficult to imagine a scenario under which this improves the chances of transportation reauthorization passing anytime soon, making an already muddy situation (see next article) that much harder to predict.

Clear as Mud

Even before the drama erupted regarding the next House Speaker, there was still no clarity on how the House plans to proceed on a transportation reauthorization bill. A few things we know for certain: the current extension of the program expires on October 29 and will have to be extended yet again, and House Speaker John Boehner (R-OH) will serve his last day in Congress on the 30th (Editor's Note: Boehner announced that he will stay on until his replacement is identified). Other than that, there is nothing but speculation. The rumor mill indicates that the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee will release a bill on or about the 26th and mark it up on or about the 28th. If that occurs (a BIG if), there won't be floor time available to get it through the full House and conferenced with the Senate in advance of the deadline.

And how do we pay for a bill? More mud there, I am afraid. House Ways and Means Chairman Paul Ryan (R-OH), who had been working with Senator Chuck Schumer (D-NY) to craft a compromise on raising transportation funds through repatriation (taxing overseas corporate earnings), waved the white flag of surrender. The message: if you want a bill anytime soon, this is not how it'll be paid for. Hearing this, some in the House, including T&I Chairman Bill Shuster (R-PA), softened to the idea of using the Senate DRIVE Act offsets. About one-third of the DRIVE Act offsets have already been used in other legislation and the remaining provisions are picking up opposition quickly. It is also hard to see the Freedom Caucus accepting the DRIVE Act pay-fors, leaving the next Speaker with a difficult choice: put the transportation bill on ice or risk the furor of the Freedom Caucus and other conservatives by passing a transportation bill with offsets they won't like.

The path to a new transportation bill is murky at best. But things change every day. And weirder things have happened. More to come.

ADMINISTRATION BRIEF

***MyCarDoesWhat* Public Education Campaign**

At a press conference yesterday, the National Safety Council and University of Iowa joined with USDOT and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration to launch the *MyCarDoesWhat* campaign. In an effort to prevent car crashes, the campaign uses videos, animation, graphics, and social media to educate the public on new car safety features.

Solutions Suggested to Solve Chicago Rail Back-Ups

In response to the “Chicago Gateway” rail delays, an Amtrak-appointed Blue Ribbon Panel has suggested three solutions for rail congestion in Chicago: improving operating practices, funding priority projects, and improving coordination by bringing together rail operators. Amtrak President and CEO Joe Boardman agreed that this problem must be presented to Congress, state legislatures, and other interested parties for a Chicago Gateway Initiative that would address these issues.

REGIONS BRIEF

SunRail Receives \$93 Million Grant for Osceola County Expansion

FTA announced a \$93 million grant to help fund a 17-mile extension of the SunRail system in the Orlando region, which is expected to open by December. SunRail expects 2,000 riders per day.

JOBS

View full list of jobs!

Chief of Staff

Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, Chicago, IL

Senior Planner

Puget Sound Regional Council, Seattle, WA

Chief Financial Officer

Alamo Area Council of Governments, San Antonio, TX

Budget Officer

Alamo Area Council of Governments, San Antonio, TX

Request for Information: TIP Management System

Stark County Regional Planning Commission, Canton, OH

Transportation Engineer/Planner/Modeler

Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission, Columbus, OH

OPPORTUNITIES

View full list of grants and events!

Countermeasure Strategies for Pedestrian Safety Webinar Series: Marked Crosswalks

October 15, 1:00 – 2:30 PM ET

Marked crosswalks indicate optimal or preferred locations for pedestrians to cross and help designate right-of-way for motorists to yield to pedestrians. This webinar will provide a comprehensive look at the range of marked crosswalks and how locations for crosswalks should be selected. It will also highlight research findings and identify case study examples of successful projects.

Large-Scale Strategic Transport Models in Australia and Europe

October 22, 11:00 AM – 1:00 PM ET

This webinar will describe six models that have been developed in conurbations and countries in

northern and western Europe by RAND Europe. The presentation will focus on the design of the models and how this relates to different policy issues in each of the areas, with consideration of data issues and the changes that have been made to the models over time.

NPMRDS Quarterly Webinar

November 3, 1:00 – 3:00 PM ET

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. 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.

CONTACT US

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