



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF REGIONAL COUNCILS

TRANSPORTATION THURSDAYS

CONGRESS BRIEF

House Approves Reauthorization Legislation

By a **363 to 64 vote**, the House overwhelmingly today approved a six-year transportation reauthorization bill, the Surface Transportation Reauthorization and Reform (STRR) Act (H.R. 3763). This vote came after two marathon days of debate regarding amendments to the legislation. The STRR Act would provide \$325 billion in new contract authority for the nation's infrastructure, renew the controversial Export-Import Bank, and make it a real possibility that a long-term transportation bill could reach the president's desk.

Of particular note, the bill:

- Contains six years of policy reform, *but only three years of funding*. But wait! An **amendment approved on the House Floor from Rep. Randy Neugebauer** (R-TX) – which replaces two of the Senate's more controversial offsets with a provision that makes funds currently contained in "surplus funds" of Federal Reserve Banks available to the HTF – seems to solve the problem of only three years of funding. Early indications are that this amendment will provide significantly higher funding than contained in the base bill.
- Provides a modest increase in the Surface Transportation Program's funding level and increases the portion of the program suballocated by population from the current 50% to 55% by FY2020. This will provide nearly \$5.0 billion in additional funding for local priorities compared to existing funding levels.
- Preserves the Transportation Alternatives Program, though it makes it a set-aside under STP. The new TAP would be funded at a flat \$819 million annually in each of the bill's six years. This funding level is slightly below the Senate's \$825 million annual level. The Senate bill also suballocates 100% of the program, but the House leaves it at 50% suballocated.
- Increases funding for metropolitan planning by more than \$120 million over the life of the STRR Act.
- Makes on-system bridges that are not on the National Highway System (half of which are owned by counties and cities) eligible for funding under the National Highway Performance Program. This is a vast improvement from the Senate's DRIVE Act reauthorization bill, which funds these bridges (along with off-system bridges) by taking 15% off the top of STP.
- Increases funding for urban and rural public transportation, including a new competitive grant program under the Bus and Bus Facilities Program.
- Contains the same provision as the Senate's DRIVE Act to fix the MAP-21 requirement that transit receive a voting position on the boards of MPOs that represent TMAs. This new provision clarifies that no changes in state law or enabling agreements are required, and explicitly allows an elected official to serve as the designated "transit representative" on the MPO board. These are changes NARC sought from lawmakers in both the Senate and the

House. The fact both bills contain this provision dramatically increases the probability that it will be in the final agreement.

Up next is a conference process between the House and Senate to resolve differences between the two versions. The funding for the program will remain a sticking point. Lawmakers on both sides of Capitol Hill are optimistic that they can complete a bill before November 20, 2015 (the expiration of the current extension of the program). This constrained timeline is more difficult due to a House recess next week, but there is no doubt that the possibility of a long-term bill on the president's desk sometime this year has increased tremendously, and now appears to be the most likely outcome. This is a watershed change from where we were just three months ago, when it seemed the prospects for a bill were approximately zero. The text of the bill is [here](#) (although the text does not include the many amendments that were accepted, most were minor).

ADMINISTRATION BRIEF

New Online Tool Promotes Health through Transportation

USDOT and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention released a new **Transportation and Health Tool** to help state DOTs, MPOs, and communities evaluate existing transportation systems and develop strategies to improve health. The tool allows users to compare their performance to other states and communities on a variety of health-related transportation indicators.

Nation's Mileage Continues to Climb

The monthly "Traffic Volume Trends" report from FHWA found that 277.3 billion miles were driven this past August, making the total for the year two trillion miles, so far. This continues the 18-month streak of monthly mileage increases with Hawaii leading the nation in the largest traffic percent increase for the past three months.

REGIONS BRIEF

Election 2015: Transportation Funding Initiatives

This week, many states and cities voted on transportation funding initiatives with a high rate of success. Seattle voters passed a \$930 million plan to improve and develop pedestrian and bicycle routes, transit, and roads. Texas passed a statewide initiative with overwhelming support to dedicate \$2.5 billion of state general sales tax to the state's transportation fund as well as using 35% of taxes collected from car sales. Voters in Maine approved an \$85 million bond. It was not all good news, however, as a local-option sales tax measure failed in Utah's largest counties, Salt Lake and Utah, though it was successful in other counties in the state. In all, the successful initiatives will generate almost \$4 billion in revenue for transportation projects.

Where We Ride: Analysis of Bicycle Commuting in American Cities

The League of American Bicyclists released its annual report on bicycle commuting. The report includes data on cities with the most bicycles, the percentage of bike commuters, walking data, and a map of each states' growth over the last nine years.

Beyond Repair? America's Infrastructure Crisis Is Local

A new report from the Manhattan Institute for Policy Research emphasizes the need to focus on local governments and the roads they own to fix America's infrastructure crisis. The report argues that current funding discussions are fixated on federal funding, which is mostly unavailable to local roads. It also provides eight policy recommendations for localities to close the funding gap.

JOBS

[View full list of jobs!](#)

Senior Transportation Demand Management Program Analyst

Posted: 11/4/2015

San Diego Association of Governments, San Diego, CA

OPPORTUNITIES

View full list of grants and events!

Transportation and Health Tool: A New Tool for Integrating Health Into Transportation Planning

November 9, 2:00 – 3:30 PM ET

USDOT and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention are offering a webinar on the new Transportation and Health Tool.

Census Transportation Planning Package (CTPP) Data Town Halls

November 9, 10:00 AM ET

November 10, 1:00 PM ET

November 12, 12:00 PM ET

The Census Bureau has directed AASHTO to request a special tabulation for their next 5-year data product that is one third (1/3) the size of the current special tabulation. AASHTO is requesting your input for the elimination of tables in the Census Transportation Planning Products (CTPP). They have employed a methodology to suggest tables for elimination, however, a key feature of the methodology (Google analytics for number of times a data table is accessed at any geography) does not take into account any users who have accessed the data by any means other than through the software. CTPP is hosting a series of “town hall” meetings to present findings and get your input and feedback. The same information will be presented at all three meetings, so you need only attend one.

No registration is necessary. Dial in Info: 1-888-585-9008 passcode/room: 433-083-926.

Industry Disruption - How Connectivity is Redefining Personal Mobility

November 12, 12:00 – 1:00 PM ET

Listen to the Executive Director of the Global Connected Customer Experience from General Motors on how connectivity is fundamental to redefining the future of personal mobility. From car-sharing programs, to autonomous vehicles, to other groundbreaking technological advances, the next 30 years are going to bring a transformational change in the auto industry.

Large-Scale Strategic Transport Models in Australia and Europe

November 19, 11:00 AM – 1:00 PM ET

This is the last webinar in a series on Large-Scale Strategic Transport Models in Australia and Europe. It will describe models of long-distance travel that have been developed for countries in Northern and Western Europe by RAND Europe. The presentation will start with a description of some of the particular characteristics and policy issues for long-distance travel, before going on to describe in detail the national model of long-distance travel that has been developed in Great Britain. The presentation will also highlight other national and corridor studies.

Transportation and Land Use Course

The Federal Highway Administration National Highway Institute is looking for hosts for a course that includes MPO staff as a primary audience. This course is designed to help practitioners develop a multimodal transportation system that supports desired land uses and helps them shape land uses to support the transportation system. Course lessons include the principles of transportation and land use; the processes through which transportation and land use issues can be jointly addressed; and implementation steps to ensure that transportation and land use systems are designed in a compatible, mutually supportive manner.

Crash Data for Planning Survey

The AASHTO Standing Committee on Planning, through NHCRP 8-36, invites your participation in a brief survey covering current and future planning activities at state DOTs, MPOs, and regional organizations. The insights and responses you provide will be used to develop a quarterly series of “snapshot” publications. These snapshots are intended to highlight current practices, address trending topics, provide best practice examples, and act as a resource for planners, executives,

legislators, and others interested in planning practices.

CONTACT US

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