

November 17, 2016

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NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF REGIONAL COUNCILS

TRANSPORTATION THURSDAYS



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CONGRESS BRIEF

115th Congressional Leadership Taking Form on Capitol Hill

Following last week's elections, Congress began shuffling around committee and leadership positions. Current Speaker of the House Paul Ryan (R-WI) has support from the Republican Conference to stay in that position, with Kevin McCarthy (R-CA) as Majority Leader. House Republicans also elected Steve Scalise (R-LA) as Majority Whip and Steve Stivers (R-OH) as leader of the National Republican Congressional Commission. Senator Mitch McConnell (R-KY) will serve a second term as Senate Majority Leader with his whole team.

For the Democrats, Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) officially announced her candidacy for House Minority Leader with Joe Crowley (D-NY) and Tim Ryan (D-OH) as potential opponents. House Democrats have pushed back their elections to November 30 to sort out their legislative agenda before choosing leaders, but Pelosi is expected to hold her position. In the Senate, Chuck Schumer (D-NY) is the newly elected Democratic leader following Harry Reid (D-NV), who is retiring at the end of this Congress. Schumer added Bernie Sanders (I-VT) and Tammy Baldwin (D-WI) to his ten person leadership team. Senator Dick Durbin (D-IL) remains the second highest ranking Democrat in the Senate.

Changes to committee leadership are also coming into focus. Senator Patrick Leahy (D-VT), who was expected to retain his post on the Judiciary Committee, will instead become Ranking Member on the Appropriations Committee. Dianne Feinstein (D-CA) will take his place as Ranking Member on the Judiciary Committee ahead of the Supreme Court nomination, making her the first woman to hold the position. Tom Carper (D-DE) will replace retiring Senator Barbara Boxer (D-CA) as Ranking Member on the Environment and Public Works Committee, and Clair McCaskill (D-MO) will move into Carper's position on the Homeland Security Committee.

Funding Uncertainty in 2017

With the current continuing resolution (CR) set to expire on December 9, House Appropriations Chairman Harold Rogers (R-KY) stated that his committee will work to extend the CR through

March 31, 2017. President-elect Trump's transition team asked Congress to push final funding decisions until next year. This short-term spending bill will fund the government through March at current funding levels, leaving the new Congress and President-elect Trump's Administration to finish the annual funding bills next year.

This week President-elect Trump's transition team said they are currently talking about creating a national infrastructure bank to fund infrastructure investments. Trump's campaign previously criticized Hillary Clinton's proposed infrastructure bank as being controlled by Washington and funded by a huge tax increase. Additionally, President Obama tried to set up a bank several times through budget proposals. In Congress, the idea of an infrastructure bank is met with thoughts of combining it with tax reform and mild enthusiasm from both sides, but not as the saving grace for infrastructure in the U.S. The [transition website](#) states that the Trump Administration seeks to invest \$550 billion but does not provide further detail.

Not So Fast on Earmarks

Despite some optimism among rank and file Republicans in the House, Speaker Ryan put the brakes on a proposal this week that would reverse the ban on earmarks in congressional spending bills. During debate among the Republican Conference in a closed door meeting this week, Ryan urged members not to make a final decision on the matter so soon after President-elect Trump was ushered into office on a "drain the swamp" message, but promised to hold a vote on the matter in the first quarter of 2017. The ban was put in place by then-Speaker Boehner (R-OH) in 2010 – and despite some grumblings about their return, no serious effort has been mounted to reinstate the practice.

Republicans Fear NHTSA May Slow Driverless Car Technology

On Tuesday, the House Energy and Commerce subcommittee held a [hearing on self-driving cars](#) where they expressed concerns about the government slowing down technological advances. Republicans questioned National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) on their move to request letters from manufacturers outlining their compliance with a safety checklist and their ability to enforce compliance and protect information. NHTSA Administrator Mark Rosekind testified that this checklist allows manufactures to meet safety standards in whatever way works best for them. He stated that it lists 15 areas to address, but not how to get there. Members of both parties asked questions about cybersecurity and emphasized its importance.

Transportation Issues to Watch

The House and Senate each passed versions of the *Water Resources Development Act* (WRDA) and now must reconcile the differences to put a bill in place. However, leadership is not making any promises and the chances of passage are unclear at this point. Both chambers in Congress held hearings this week on driverless car issues and USDOT is expected to issue a rule on vehicle-to-vehicle technology by the end of the year. Other issues to watch include TSA funding levels, the proposed trucking hours of service cap, and a new FAA drone rule regarding flight over crowds.

ADMINISTRATION BRIEF

NHTSA Sets 'Quiet Car' Safety Standard

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) announced a new rule this week that adds a sound requirement for all new hybrid and electric vehicles. The new rule is intended to reduce pedestrian injury by providing a better indication of where the vehicle is for pedestrians, particularly blind and visually-impaired pedestrians. The new vehicles will emit a noise when traveling under 19 miles per hour. Manufacturers have until September 1, 2019 to ensure all new hybrid and electric vehicles comply with the safety standard.

REGIONS BRIEF

House Recognizes the Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission

Yesterday, Representative Peter Visclosky (D-IN) recognized the Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission (NIRPC) for their 50th anniversary. He indicated the vital role they play in the region for transportation, environmental planning, and land-use analysis. Representative Visclosky also commended NIRPC on their work on projects along the lakeshore and thanked current NARC Senior Vice President Geof Benson and NIRPC Executive Director Ty Warner among others for their work. Congratulations on 50 years, NIRPC!

CDOT to Test Taxing Drivers by the Mile Instead of at the Pump

Beginning in December, the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) will launch the Road Usage Charge Pilot Program. The program will recruit 100 volunteers to track how far they drive and will “pay” 1.2 cents per mile for four months. While no money will actually be exchanged during the pilot, CDOT hopes to learn more about revenue collection and mileage reporting. Participants in the program will be able to track mileage by recording their odometer or plugging a device into their car that tracks mileage with or without GPS. The gas tax revenue in Colorado has slowed down in growth over the past decade and is down overall from \$480.2 million in 2007 to \$475.7 in 2015, leaving the state no choice but to look for other revenue options. However, this new revenue source is not perfect and the first pilot program last year in Oregon found that a Prius driver would actually pay more under the per-mile program than with the gas tax while a Ford F-150 driver would pay less under the new system. California is also currently testing a pay-by-the-mile program.

JOBS

[View full list of jobs!](#)

Transportation Planner

Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission, Philadelphia, PA

Associate Planner

Yakima Valley Conference of Governments, Yakima, WA

Budget Officer

Alamo Area Council of Governments, San Antonio, TX

Psychological Examiner

Alamo Area Council of Governments, San Antonio, TX

OPPORTUNITIES

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

Volkswagen Settlement Discussion

November 18, 2:00 – 3:00 PM ET

EPA is holding a webinar to learn more about the **Environmental Mitigation Trust** for states and state associations.

REMI PI+ 2.0 Launch Series

November 29 & December 1, 2:00 PM ET - **Session 1: Overview: Dynamic vs. Static**

December 6 & 8, 2:00 ET - **Session 2: Solutions-based Analysis: Modeling Policy using REMI**

December 13 & 15, 2:00 PM ET- **Session 3: Economic and Demographic Dimensions of Regional Growth**

December 20 & 22, 2:00 PM ET- **Session 4: From Start to Finish: Completing a REMI Analysis**

REMI is offering a new webinar series for both current users and anyone who would like to learn more about their dynamic economic analysis. The series will explore the fundamental concepts that shaped the development of REMI 2.0– dynamic economic modeling and solutions-based analysis. It will also demonstrate best practices in modeling so users can take full advantage of this enhanced platform.

Regional Models of Cooperation: Bicycle/Pedestrian and Transit Connections

November 30, 1:00 – 2:30 PM ET

This FHWA webinar will focus on cooperative solutions to better connect bicycle/pedestrian and transit networks as well as cooperation in regional bicycle/pedestrian and transit planning. It will feature speakers from the Mid-America Regional Council, LA Metro, and Utah Transit Authority. Presenters will discuss the opportunities and challenges of facilitating connections between transit, bicycle, and pedestrian networks with a focus on the mechanisms for developing and maintaining collaborative solutions.

FHWA Soliciting INVEST Implementation Projects - Round 3

December 1, 2:30 – 3:30 PM ET

The Sustainable Transport and Climate Change Team, within FHWA's Office of Natural Environment, invites you to participate in a webinar regarding Round 3 of the Infrastructure Voluntary Evaluation Sustainability Tool (INVEST) implementation projects. FHWA recently announced Round 3, which is an applied research funding opportunity for transportation agencies to use INVEST to assess and enhance the sustainability of their projects and programs. The deadline for submitting letters of interest is January 5, 2017.

Introduction to Transportation Conformity

December 6-8, Chicago, IL

FTA and The National Transit Institute (NTI) will offer a training course, Introduction to Transportation Conformity, on December 6-8 at the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning in Chicago, IL. The course will provide basic information about conformity requirements and the relationship between transportation and air quality planning. The course is designed for new staff as well as senior staff unfamiliar with the conformity process who work at FHWA, FTA, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), state DOTs, MPOs, state/county/local planning agencies, state and local air quality agencies, transit agencies, and consultant firms.

Decide with Data: Strengthen Your Sustainability Efforts

December 13, 3:00 – 4:30 PM ET

Strong, sustainable communities start with great decision makers – and all good decisions are rooted in data. This type of insight is notoriously difficult to access, analyze, and share. During this webinar, Stephen Hardy, Chief Operating Officer at mySidewalk, will demonstrate how local leaders everywhere are tackling this great dilemma and making informed, confident decisions using data (both local and federal) to build stronger communities.

12th Annual Texas Transportation Forum

February 5-7, 2017, J.W. Marriott, Austin, TX

The mission of the Texas Transportation Forum is to annually bring together transportation leaders and advocates, industry innovators, local, state and national policy makers to discuss the "State of Transportation" and how to take "beyond the box" ideas and turn them into reality. In 2017, TxDOT will celebrate a century of service. However, a state as big as Texas demands a continued commitment to its transportation needs. How will the innovations of today and the geopolitical landscape effect what's next for transportation in Texas, the nation, and the world?

Save the Date! 2017 National Conference of Regions

February 12-15, 2017 – Washington Court Hotel, 525 New Jersey Ave NW Washington, DC

The National Conference of Regions is NARC's forum to determine key policy issues and a legislative agenda for the year ahead, targeting topics central to our members' missions and their local elected officials' focus. Capitol Hill Day is the final day of the conference, February 15, 2017. Additional information will be available soon.

Reminder! NCHRP Snapshot Survey: Resiliency Planning

The AASHTO Standing Committee on Planning (SCOP), through the NHCRP 8-36 program, 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 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. The survey explores the topics of risk, resiliency, and redundancy in long range planning. Please distribute the survey to the person(s) within your agency who may best respond to this topic.

CONTACT US

