



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF REGIONAL COUNCILS

TRANSPORTATION THURSDAYS

CONGRESS BRIEF

FAST Act is Now the Law of the Land!

With surprisingly little fanfare, President Obama last Friday signed into law the *Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act*. The five-year reauthorization bill rings in at over \$300 billion, including about \$281 billion for surface transportation. The FAST Act is the first truly long-term reauthorization since SAFETEA-LU was signed into law more than a decade ago. The bill represents a huge accomplishment for House and Senate Republicans. In particular, new House Speaker Paul Ryan (R-OH) scores a major victory just a few weeks into his speakership and Transportation and Infrastructure Committee Chairman Bill Shuster (R-PA) is proving himself adept at ushering large infrastructure bills through the House on a bipartisan basis and getting them to the President's desk. In the Senate, the relationship between Environment and Public Works Chairman Jim Inhofe (R-OK) and Ranking Member Barbara Boxer (D-CA) was a key component to getting the bill finished, though the process was marshalled largely through the office of Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY).

Critics question the source of additional funding that was required to make up the gap between current gas tax revenues and the bill's spending levels. To pass a long-term bill with at least a modicum of growth in available funding meant cobbling together gas tax revenues and other "pay-fors." In the case of the FAST Act, additional funds came from using the Federal Reserve's "surplus" funds, selling oil from the Strategic Petroleum Reserve, and a number of other sources. By choosing to close the funding gap by means other than raising the gas tax means that the cliff will only be that much higher in five years when the FAST Act expires. Both this Congress and the last have grown increasingly comfortable with funding transportation reauthorizations this way. It will be interesting to see what this means for reauthorizing the FAST Act down the line.

ADMINISTRATION BRIEF

Smart City Challenge

Proposals Due: February 4, 2016

USDOT announced a new **grant** program that will help cities address the challenges of growing populations and transportation system demands. USDOT will select one medium sized city to focus resources on to demonstrate how advanced intelligent transportation systems (ITS) technologies and applications can be used to reduce congestion, keep travelers safe, and support economic vitality in innovative ways. Up to \$40 million in funding will go to the city that can come up with the most forward-thinking and innovative plan. MPOs are eligible. An **in-person forum** will be held on December 15 from 9:00 AM – 4:00 PM ET to learn about elements for creating smart and connected cities.

Case Studies in Delivering Safe, Comfortable, and Connected Pedestrian and Bicycle Networks

FHWA released a report on pedestrian and bicycle network principles that highlights communities from around the country. The report seeks to inspire and provide guidance to agencies and

stakeholders for future development and improvement of these networks.

REGIONS BRIEF

Regional Freight Issues in MAP Forum Spotlight

Last week, the Metropolitan Area Planning (MAP) Forum - an organization of New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut metro area MPOs - held their annual meeting. The meeting focused on regional freight issues and the need to create long-term plans. The group heard from state departments of transportation, CALSTART, and a representative from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security on freight plans and the importance of freight on the economy as well as sharing their own projects and goals.

JOBS

[View full list of jobs!](#)

Community Development Manager

Flint Hills Regional Council, Ogden, KS

Transportation Planner III

Pikes Peak Area Council of Governments, Colorado Springs, CO

Resource Development – Principal Planner

Community Planning Association, Meridian, ID

OPPORTUNITIES

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

NARC WEBINAR! Scenario Planning Webinar

January 4, 2:00 – 3:30 PM ET *Please note the new time!*

Join PlaceMatters and NARC to learn about recent research on the use of scenario planning tools to support transportation and land use planning in regions and recommendations to make them more readily available and valuable to regions planning for their future.

Connected Vehicle Pilot Era Standards Rapid Consensus Webinar

December 14-15, 10:00 AM – 5:00 PM ET

USDOT will convene a 2-day Rapid Consensus meeting involving Connected Vehicle Pilot Deployment Sites, the Certification Operating Council, and other key stakeholders. This meeting is open to the public. However, the focus of the meeting is the coordination of the pilot teams, not a general discussion of standards. This meeting will allow participants to begin to arrive at a common understanding on a number of key issues related to the goal of deploying interoperable connected vehicles system in the Pilots Era.

Highlighted FHWA Freight Transportation Initiatives- Intermodal Connectors and Freight Analysis Framework

December 16, 1:00 – 2:30 PM ET

This Talking Freight webinar will provide information that can enhance public sector freight transportation planning initiatives and help private sector freight industry professionals better understand current conditions and trends on the U.S. freight transportation system.

America Walks: Livable Communities for all Ages

January 14, 2:00 – 3:00 PM ET

Join **America Walks** and AARP in the first webinar of the Surgeon Generals new initiative. To meet its commitment to creating great places for people of all ages, AARP developed several resources that should be in the toolbox of any walking advocate. AARP will walk participants through two of their resources, the *Livability Index*, and the *Livable Economy: People, Places and Prosperity* report. Following, hear how one local organization is using both resources to make walkable communities a reality for people aged 8 to 80.

CONTACT US

Copyright © 2015 National Association of Regional Councils, All rights reserved.