

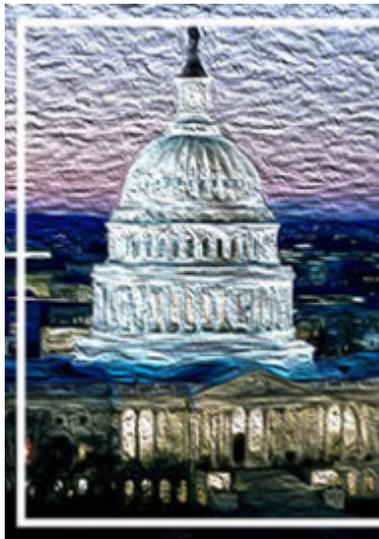
December 15, 2016

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NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF REGIONAL COUNCILS

TRANSPORTATION THURSDAYS



2017 NATIONAL
CONFERENCE OF REGIONS

FEBRUARY 12-15
WASHINGTON, DC

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Final Rule on MPO Coordination and Planning Area Reform Released

The MPO Coordination Final Rule was made available by USDOT today, in advance of its publication in the Federal Register. This final rule makes two major changes to the proposed rule released earlier this year: 1) it includes a process by which MPO(s) and state(s) may seek a waiver if they can successfully demonstrate to the Secretary why it is not feasible to produce a single set of planning documents AND can successfully demonstrate how all MPOs are currently achieving the goals of the rule; and 2) pushes implementation until 2024, or two years after the release of the 2020 Census results. NARC has been visiting Capitol Hill to educate lawmakers on the negative impact of the proposal on MPOs and encouraging their opposition to the rule. We will follow up with a more in-depth analysis after we review, but it seems likely that these are the only changes.

CONGRESS BRIEF

Continuing Resolution Signed

Early Saturday morning, President Obama signed the continuing resolution (CR) to extend funding for the government until April 28, 2017. Senate Democrats held up the vote until the last minute Friday night because they felt the measure did not do enough to secure health care for retired coal miners. The CR passed 63-36, with thirteen Republicans opposing and twenty-two Democrats supporting.

Water Infrastructure Improvements for the Nation (WIIN) Act

The **Water Infrastructure Improvements for the Nation (WIIN) Act**—so called as a tribute to President-elect Trump by Transportation and Infrastructure Chairman Bill Shuster (R-PA)—was passed on December 10th as one of the final achievements of the 114th Congress.

The WIIN Act is a broader package that includes the *Water Resources Development Act of 2016* (WRDA), which passed both chambers in September; the *Water and Waste Act of 2016*, which authorizes a more active role for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency in safe drinking water

infrastructure (including in Flint, Michigan); and drought relief for California. Negotiations for the WIIN Act were carried out at the staff level, rather than in conference committee. Final legislation was released on December 5th.

The final bill includes nearly \$11.7 billion for water infrastructure projects, \$170 million to help Flint, and a 70-page provision to provide drought aid to California. WIIN Act provisions include:

- Authorizes thirty new Army Corps of Engineers projects and modifies eight existing projects, and allows the Corps to provide technical assistance to non-federal project sponsors developing their own feasibility study.
- Authorizes emergency aid for Flint to support community lead prevention and education programming. Passage of both the CR and WIIN Act were essential in securing \$170 million for safe drinking water access in Flint and other communities. This provision also includes \$20 million for the *Water Infrastructure Financing Innovation Act* (WIFIA) and expands the scope of allowable projects.
- Allows additional pumping, desalination, and storage of water in California from the Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta to the Central Valley Project to aid in drought relief.
- Authorizes the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative, *Lake Tahoe Restoration Act*, Delaware River Basin Conservation Program, and Columbia River Basin Restoration Initiative.
- Authorizes significant new funding to help communities expand water supply through investments in water recycling and desalination, and authorizes new water recycling and reuse projects under the Title XVI program.
- Builds on the FAST Act commitment to further invest in the nation's freight network, both the surface transportation network and the water transportation network.
- Ensures that Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund spending levels are upheld to support the nation's ports, harbors, and waterways, and requires that 10% of annual funding be used for smaller commercial harbors.
- Includes a one-year "Buy American" provision for fiscal year 2017 to use American made iron and steel.

ADMINISTRATION BRIEF

More Cabinet Picks This Week

Several more cabinet level positions were announced this week by President-elect Trump. Perhaps the most controversial pick to date is the nomination of Exxon Mobil CEO Rex Tillerson as Secretary of State. Tillerson, who has no government or diplomatic experience, has been criticized from both sides of the aisle, including by Senators Marco Rubio (R-FL) and John McCain (R-AZ), for his ties to Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Representative and former Navy SEAL Ryan Zinke (R-MT) has been nominated as Interior Secretary. Zinke is generally a proponent of oil and gas interests, and has criticized the Obama Administration for closing loopholes for fossil fuel companies and showing little regard for coal-producing communities. Zinke also voted to approve the Keystone XL pipeline. His wife, Lolita Zinke, is listed as a member of the transition team.

Former Texas Governor Rick Perry has been nominated as Energy Secretary. Perry, who ran for president in 2012 and 2016, famously forgot the U.S. Department of Energy as one of the agencies he wanted to eliminate during a 2011 debate. As governor for fifteen years, he advocated for a mix of energy sources and currently serves on the board of the company that is seeking to construct the Dakota Access Pipeline. Perry has also expressed doubt over how human activity affects climate change.

Outstanding Cabinet positions include Secretary of Agriculture and Secretary of Veterans Affairs.

USDOT Issues Proposed Rule to Advance the Deployment of Connected Vehicle Technologies

A new proposed rule from USDOT would require vehicle-to-vehicle (V2V) communication technology on all new light-duty vehicles by 2023. Once fully implemented, this technology could prevent hundreds of thousands of crashes and reduce the 35,000 deaths that occur on the nation's roads each year by creating a standardized messaging system for cars to talk to each other. FHWA is expected to release a rule soon that will help transportation planners integrate this

technology into roadway infrastructure. The rule is open for comment for 90 days.

FTA Transit-Oriented Development Technical Assistance Selected Projects

Five communities have been selected as part of round two of the Transit Orientated Development (TOD) Technical Assistance Initiative to create mixed-use, walkable communities near transit. Birmingham, AL; Omaha, NE; Albuquerque, NM; Charlotte, NC; and Tacoma, WA will work to focus on connecting economically disadvantaged populations to transit. Four out of the five grantees include affordable housing or housing in their TOD strategies.

USDOT Connects You to Opportunity: The Transportation Toolkit

USDOT's **Transportation Toolkit** is designed to help community leaders make effective transportation decisions. It provides useful tips, such as when to contact agencies with an idea. An Online Resources Library details specific laws and topics that are important in transportation planning. Finally, the **Facilitator's Guide**, can help communities facilitate their own Leadership Academy to educate transportation stakeholders.

REGIONS BRIEF

As Uber Launches Self-Driving in SF, Regulators Shut It Down

Uber planned to begin testing autonomous vehicles yesterday in San Francisco, but a letter from the California Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) told them to stop testing and seek a permit or the DMV will seek legal action. Uber has not commented on the letter, but some twenty other companies have received DMV permits to test their vehicles on California roads.

The Case for Healthy Places Report

The Project for Public Spaces released a new report, *The Case for Healthy Places: Improving Health through Placemaking*. The report offers case studies, recommendations, and guidance to use placemaking as the framework for creating healthy communities.

Freight Industry Improves Train Management in Chicago Region

A year after the Chicago Integrated Rail Operations Center (CIROC) was established, freight rail is better prepared to manage rail traffic within Chicago. CIROC monitors and facilitates efficient rail operations and operates around the clock to reduce congestion and increase capacity. Freight transported via rail in Chicago is expected to increase by nearly 150 percent between 2010 and 2040 and CIROC is a great step to prepare for the future in the region.

JOBS

[View full list of jobs!](#)

Environmental Sustainability Program Planners

Tri-County Regional Planning Commission, Lansing, MI

Executive Director

Northern Virginia Regional Commission, Fairfax, VA

OPPORTUNITIES

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

Talking Freight - Completed TIGER Program Freight Projects – Success Stories

December 21, 1:00 – 2:30 PM ET

The TIGER Discretionary Grant Program, which started in 2009 as part of the *The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act*, has allocated \$5.6 billion dollars to approximately 420 projects during the eight rounds of the program, a number of which were freight-focused projects. Many of the projects selected in the early rounds of the TIGER Program have now been completed, and the experience those grantees had in implementing their projects could provide helpful insights for future TIGER projects and other discretionary grant programs, including the FASTLANE Grant Program. This webinar will feature discussion about successfully implemented TIGER Program freight projects, both from the overall program point of view and from the individual project sponsors' points of view.

Moving Forward in 2017: Active Transportation in the New Congress and Trump Administration

January 5, 2:00 PM ET

Join America Walks and Rails-to-Trails Conservancy for a policy briefing that will explore what's anticipated in federal trail, walking and biking policy as the new Congress and Trump administration prepare to take office. Experts in transportation and public health policy and former Congressman Tom Petri (R-WI) will share their intelligence and unique insights about what the new political climate will bring for active transportation. Participants will be invited to ask questions at the end of the briefing.

Advanced Training Course on Environmental Justice

January 24-25, New York, NY

Applications due December 22

FTA and The National Transit Institute (NTI) will offer an invitation-only advanced training course on Environmental Justice (EJ) January 24-25 in New York City. This course, which is for staff from transit agencies, MPOs, and state DOTs, incorporates case study-based discussions and activities so participants can consider new approaches to apply EJ best practices in their communities. Discussions will focus on examples of best practices from the field. To be considered for this workshop, fill out the **application questionnaire** by Thursday, December 22, 2016.

FTA Shared Mobility Online Dialogue

Closes: January 27

Advancements in smart phones, web applications, and related public transportation technology innovations are driving the growth of shared mobility concepts and on-demand solutions like bike-sharing, car-hailing, and innovative demand-response bus services. As the transit industry embraces partnerships with these shared and on-demand services, transit agency staff, and others have sought FTA guidance regarding funding eligibility, civil rights requirements, and other conditions for receiving FTA support. See FTA's **Shared Mobility frequently asked questions** clarifying formula eligibility for FTA grant programs and compliance with other federal requirements, or join FTA's **Shared Mobility Online Dialogue** to offer ideas, ask questions, and comment.

Registration Open! 2017 National Conference of Regions

February 12-15 – 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. Additional information will be available soon. Capitol Hill Day is the final day of the conference, February 15, 2017.

CONTACT US

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