

**NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF REGIONAL COUNCILS**

TRANSPORTATION THURSDAYS

## CONGRESS BRIEF

### **Omnibus Spending Package Transportation Update**

This week, Congress released a \$57.6 billion spending package for Transportation-Housing and Urban Development (THUD) programs for fiscal year 2016 as part of the larger Omnibus funding package. The THUD bill adopts the policies and funding levels from the newly-passed FAST Act. The plan also reversed cuts from the TIGER grant program to maintain the current \$500 million funding level. The package continues a restriction on double trailer trucks on the national highway system, even though it was in both the House and Senate appropriations bills. Transit commuters earned a huge win, as the bill restores **parity** between parking and transit benefits and makes the change permanent. Both will now receive up to \$255 per month.

## ADMINISTRATION BRIEF

### **Smart City Forum**

After recently announcing a \$40 million Smart City grant, USDOT this week held a forum on Smart Cities. The many speakers and panels included the Federal Transit Administration, White House Office of Science and Technology Policy, Vulcan Foundation, and U.S. Transportation Secretary Anthony Foxx. Mark Dowd from the Office of Research and Technology emphasized how the tech industry gave especially positive feedback on the program and the importance of cities being “in it to win it.” Secretary Anthony Foxx explained how USDOT could have focused on several smaller grants hoping the work would all come together, but instead chose one large grant that will advance technology and converge it in one great example of what is possible. The grant has no eligibility requirements, only criteria, to attract all dedicated cities. Following the February 4 deadline, five finalists will be chosen with the final city being awarded in June 2016.

### **Pedestrians and Cyclists: Cities, States, and DOT Are Implementing Actions to Improve Safety**

The Government Accountability Office released a new report highlighting the growing number of traffic fatalities to pedestrians and cyclists. The report interviewed cities and states to learn more about their challenges with this problem and how to solve it.

### **Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS) Registration**

The Federal Aviation Administration announced this week that owners of small unmanned aircrafts must register them by February 19, 2016. Registrants will need to provide their basic information in return for an identification number that must be marked on the drone. The new online registration system is only for hobby or recreation aircrafts and opens on December 21.

## REGIONS BRIEF

### **Next Stop on Amtrak's Northeast Corridor: Funding Crisis**

There has been a strong focus on the 457-mile route in the Northeast this year, as the need for investment intensifies. Congress is divided on Amtrak and the FRA estimates that the system needs \$20 billion just to keep the region running. The region faces fiscal and practical challenges, as it

will be difficult to coordinate multiple governments, agencies, and communities to run the eight commuter lines and four freight railroads in the corridor. The Gateway Project, which includes the new rail tunnel under the Hudson River, raised the hopes of getting improvements started. However, outgoing Amtrak CEO Joseph Boardman warns that Congress and governors wait for major failures before making improvements and doesn't anticipate additional funding for the improvements coming through regular appropriations. With the dismal funding outlook, Amtrak will continue to face infrastructure failures and service disruptions in this critical rail corridor.

### **What Will It Take to Make Las Vegas Walkable?**

The Regional Transportation Commission of Southern Nevada has proposed a \$12 billion plan to improve transit and walkability in Las Vegas. One of the main elements of the plan is connecting the airport to the Las Vegas Strip as well as the convention center to downtown by light rail. Upgrades also include rapid transit bus lines, expanding the monorail, and making the convention area more pedestrian friendly. The Strip will see more elevated bridges and walkways. The plan will have two months of review with a vote in March 2016.

### **Des Moines Area MPO: Year 1 Mobilizing Tomorrow**

Last year, the Des Moines Area MPO approved *Mobilizing Tomorrow* as the long range transportation plan for the year 2050 with four high-level goals. New data has been released to highlight how the region is doing in relation to these four goals.

## **JOBS**

*[View full list of jobs!](#)*

### **Community Planner**

Cowlitz-Wahkiakum Council of Governments, Kelso, WA

## **OPPORTUNITIES**

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

### **Solicitation of Nominations for Membership: Advisory Committee on Supply Chain Competitiveness**

Applications Due: December 18, 5:00 PM ET

The U.S. Department of Commerce has released a notice seeking members for the Advisory Committee on Supply Chain Competitiveness.

### **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.

### **Countermeasure Strategies for Pedestrian Safety: Roundabouts**

January 6, 1:00 – 2:30 PM ET

The next installment of the FHWA Countermeasure Strategies for Pedestrian Safety webinar series will provide detailed information about using roundabouts to improve safety for pedestrians. Roundabouts provide an alternative design to traditional intersections that can improve safety for pedestrians, bicyclists, and motorists. By using a modern roundabout design to lower vehicle speeds through an intersection, safety and efficiency can be improved. This presentation will provide an in-depth look at roundabout design and discuss ways that roundabouts can be used to improve safety for pedestrians. Following the presentation, participants will be able to submit questions during a discussion period.

### **Step It Up!: Action Institute to Increase Walking and Walkability MPO Request for Funding Assistance**

Applications Due: January 22, 2016

Event: April 26-28, 2016 Atlanta, GA

The National Association of Chronic Disease Directors (NACDD) seeks applications from MPOs for competitive funding assistance to support attendance at the second annual walkability action institute, entitled *Step It Up!: Action Institute to Increase Walking and Walkability*. NACDD seeks collaborative applications from MPOs to participate in this walkability action institute project and will provide travel assistance funding for up to ten interdisciplinary regional teams to attend the action institute.

### **The Role of Commercial Establishment Surveys in Freight Behavior Research; and the Modeling of Freight Trip Generation, Freight Generation, and Service Trips**

January 28, 1:00 – 2:30 PM ET

Learn about the role of commercial establishment surveys in regional and statewide transportation planning, freight demand forecasting, and modeling. Presenters will discuss common methods and approaches to collecting survey data and typical challenges encountered when conducting the survey. The use of data obtained via establishment-level surveys to estimate disaggregate Freight Generation (FG), Freight Trip Generation (FTG), and Service Trip Generation (STG) models will also be described.

### **RFI: Every Day Counts Initiative**

Deadline: January 31, 2016

FHWA is looking for proven, market-ready innovations for the fourth round of the Every Day Counts initiative. The purpose of this request for information (RFI) is to obtain information from state, local, and industry partners as well as the public regarding proven processes or technologies that have the potential to provide efficiency in the planning, design, construction, operations, and/or maintenance of the nation's highway system. FHWA requests information from all sources regarding innovations and processes that have the potential to transform the way the highway transportation community does business by shortening project delivery time, enhancing roadway safety, reducing traffic congestion, and/or improving environmental sustainability.

### **Data Visualization Methods for Transportation Agencies Survey**

The National Cooperative Highway Research Program (NCHRP) is researching data visualization methods for transportation agencies. The project includes putting together a helpful guide to support transportation professionals in displaying data in a way that connects with an audience and supports understanding of transportation issues. The survey will ask you to describe two particularly effective examples of your organization's work (not necessarily the most involved, interactive, or complex). The product of this research will be a guide to assist transportation planners in selecting and applying visualization methods. The guide will be published as an interactive website and traditional report.

### **Connected Vehicles 101 Course**

USDOT released a new free online course that highlights the basics of connected vehicle technology. This introductory course targets transportation planners, managers, and engineers at state and local agency levels, who are interested in learning more about the benefits and implications of the connected vehicle program and its public agencies. Participants will learn about the safety, mobility, and environmental applications envisioned for the connected vehicle environment.

## **CONTACT US**

