



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF REGIONAL COUNCILS

eREGIONS



Conference Agenda: We've added a number of new speakers. Check out our [updated draft agenda](#) today!

Peer Exchanges: Join NARC for two different peer exchange groups during the 2017 National Conference of Regions. NARC intends for these meetings to initiate a network of peer-to-peer learning and best practice sharing. For the Energy and Environment Group, please email Cameron Herbolzheimer (cameron@narc.org) with the proper contact for your organization. For communications and public affairs directors, please email Anna Rosenbaum (anna@narc.org) with the proper contact for your organization.

NEWS FROM WASHINGTON

The Senate is in session; House will return on Monday, January 23.

Cabinet Overview

It's Inauguration Week in D.C., and NARC offices will be closed in honor of the federal holiday. The Senate continues hearings for President-elect Trump's Cabinet nominees this week:

- Betsy DeVos Nomination for Education Secretary
- Governor Nikki Haley (R-SC) for U.S. Representative to the United Nations
- Steven Mnuchin for Treasury Secretary
- Former Gov. Rick Perry (R-TX) for Energy Secretary
- Representative Tom Price (R-GA) for Health and Human Services Secretary
- Scott Pruitt for Environmental Protection Agency Administrator
- Wilbur Ross for Commerce Secretary
- Ryan Zinke Nomination for Interior Secretary

Local issues were on the minds of Senators during nomination hearings last week. Transportation Secretary nominee Elaine Chao had a friendly welcome to the Senate Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee. Chao was introduced by her husband, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY), and was praised for her experience from both sides of the aisle, indicating a likely easy, bi-partisan confirmation in the pending full Senate vote. When questioned about President-elect Trump's infrastructure package, Chao indicated that it would include federal funding but did not mention specific numbers. She also acknowledged the need to fix the Highway Trust Fund as a top priority and suggested an infrastructure task force to help the president identify what constitutes infrastructure and which projects to prioritize in a potential federal spending package. Senator Bill Nelson (D-FL) inquired about her position on privatizing air traffic control to which she stated that the administration has not made a decision and is open to ideas. Chao did not offer an opinion on the MPO Coordination rulemaking when questioned by Senator Tammy Duckworth (D-IL), but promised to take a more in-depth look and work with the Senator on the issue.

Dr. Ben Carson met with the Senate Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs, assuring Senators that he would support local programs, including the Community Development Block Grants and rental assistance programs. Carson suggested that he would provide more authority for local voices in setting housing policies rather than using federal mandates and expressed concern over the connections between safe housing and public health. Federal housing programs continually face budget cuts, and will likely be the target of cuts again this year as the new Congress seeks to increase defense spending.

Healthcare Repeal Repercussions

In overwhelmingly party-line votes, the Republican-controlled House and Senate adopted a budget resolution designed solely to put the repeal of President Barack Obama's healthcare law on a fast track. The Senate approved the measure last Thursday by a 51-48 vote, and the House passed it on Friday by a 227-198 vote.

The ability of Republicans to push the budget measure to adoption in the first two weeks of the 115th Congress marked a victory for members who have scorned the healthcare law they say comes with too many costs and government red tape. The adopted resolution includes instructions for a reconciliation process that would allow Republicans to push through a repeal bill in the Senate without the risk of a Democratic filibuster.

There's no agreement yet on which elements of those plans should be used or discarded, nor how the transition period should be structured to avoid throwing millions of Americans off their health insurance without recourse. President-elect Donald Trump, who pledged to repeal Obama's law, has promised to replace it but has not provided any details. Republicans say they do have plans, pointing to several versions of repeal bills they offered in previous years. The public will learn more during Price's confirmation hearing for Health and Human Services Secretary this week.

FCC Requests Comments on Local Wireless Facilities

Before the holidays, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) released a Public Notice seeking comments on local wireless facilities siting policies as they apply to small cell infrastructure. Local government groups are concerned that a petition filed by Mobilitie, a wireless infrastructure provider, would substantially limit cities' authority over public rights of way and ability to assess fees for access. The National League of Cities (NLC), National Association of Counties (NACo), and others called on the FCC to extend the comment period to get more information on the local impact of the requested changes. *Initial comments are due February 6, and reply comments are due March 8.*

EDA Issues Final Rule for the Regional Innovation Series Program

The U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA) issued a **final rule** applicable to the Regional Innovation Strategies (RIS) Program last Thursday. Launched in 2014, EDA through its RIS Program, awards grants for capacity-building programs that provide proof-of-concept and commercialization assistance to innovators and entrepreneurs and for operational support to organizations that provide essential early-stage funding to startup companies. Since inception, EDA has invested approximately \$40 million dollars and awarded 98 grants to increase the economic competitiveness and improve the quality of life of communities across the country. The rule will become effective on February 10.

EPA Awards \$12.7 Million to Assist Small Drinking Water and Wastewater Systems

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is awarding \$12.7 million in grants to help small drinking and wastewater systems and private well owners. More than 97 percent of the nation's 157,000 public water systems serve fewer than 10,000 people, and more than 80 percent of these systems serve fewer than 500 people. Many small systems face unique challenges in providing reliable drinking water and wastewater services that meet federal and state regulations. These challenges can include a lack of financial resources, aging infrastructure, and high staff turnover. "Ensuring safe drinking water for all Americans, whether they live in a small town or a big city, is a priority for EPA and these grants will help smaller systems in communities across the country," said Joel Beauvais, deputy assistant administrator for EPA's Office of Water.

FEMA Seeks Comments on an Updated Disaster Deductible Concept

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) is working to reform the way the federal government supports states following disasters, and is actively exploring the concept of a disaster deductible. A disaster deductible program has the potential to incentivize mitigation strategies, promote risk-informed decision-making, and build resilience. A deliberate effort to reduce risk in state and local government plans and budgets will enhance disaster response and post-disaster recovery capabilities nationwide.

After considering 150 public comments from a review in 2016, FEMA developed a fuller deductible concept model that is now available for public comment. This Supplemental Advanced Notice of Proposed Rulemaking is available for 90 days on www.Regulations.gov under docket ID [FEMA_FRDOC_0001](#).

OTHER NEWS

Big Health Equity Report Released

Communities in Action: Pathways to Health Equity is the result of a year-long analysis by a 19-member committee of national experts in public health, health care, civil rights, social science, education, research and business. The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation commissioned the report as part of a \$10 million, five-year grant to the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine to examine solutions to promote health equity. The report identifies effective or promising solutions to advance health equity and highlights the inspirational work being done in several exemplar communities that are already making positive change. The report also recommends specific steps for leaders across education, transportation, housing, planning, public health, business and other sectors to make health equity a priority for the nation.

REGION SPOTLIGHT

New SEMCOG Video: *Developing Regional Solutions*

This promotional video showcases the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments' (SEMCOG) role in creating a link between local governments throughout Southeast Michigan. This video is the first installment of a series that highlights SEMCOG communities in pursuit of regional goals. Upcoming videos will focus on making the region safe and accessible, collaborating for regional success, the value of SEMCOG membership, and what individuals can do to help solve regional issues.

FEATURED JOBS

[View full list of jobs!](#)

Economic Development Specialist

Puget Sound Regional Council, Seattle, WA

Quality Assurance Reviewer

Alamo Area Council of Governments, San Antonio, TX

Transportation Planner

Wasatch Front Regional Council, Salt Lake City, UT

GIS Modeler

Community Planning Association of Southwest Idaho, Meridian, ID

Principal Data Analyst

Houston-Galveston Area Council, Houston, TX

Senior Planner

Houston-Galveston Area Council, Houston, TX

AirCheck Texas Inspector

Houston-Galveston Area Council, Houston, TX

Systems Analyst

Houston-Galveston Area Council, Houston, TX

Public Outreach Manager

Houston-Galveston Area Council, Houston, TX

Principal Planner

Houston-Galveston Area Council, Houston, TX

Senior Regional Planner

San Diego Association of Governments, San Diego, CA

Administrative Professional I

West Florida Regional Planning Council, Pensacola, FL

Planner II

West Florida Regional Planning Council, Pensacola, FL

FUNDING

[View full list of grants!](#)

EPA Announces WIFIA Funding Opportunity

Letter of Interest Due: April 10 by midnight

Webinars: **February 9, 2:00-3:30 PM ET**; **March 7, 1:00-2:30 PM ET**

This week, EPA announced the availability of funds for the *Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act* (WIFIA). WIFIA provides low-interest loans and loan guarantees for large water infrastructure projects of national or regional significance, which includes projects of at least \$20 million or \$5 million for communities serving less than 25,000 people. The Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) solicits letters of interest from prospective borrowers, outlines the process that prospective borrowers must follow to be considered for WIFIA credit assistance, and establishes relative weights for the selection criteria. EPA is hosting two webinars on **February 9** and **March 7** for prospective borrowers that will provide a short overview of the WIFIA program and explain the process for submitting and evaluating WIFIA letters of interest.

National Creative Placemaking Fund Grants

Register by February 14, 3:59 PM ET

Submit by February 22, 3:59 PM ET

Artplace America has \$9.5 million available for projects that work with artists and arts organizations to build stronger, healthier communities anywhere in the United States. Applicants will need to register in the ArtPlace Fluxx system by February 14 and then submit their project by February 22.

EVENTS

[View full list of events!](#)

Reminder! How MPOs Use CMAQ Funding for Alternative Fuel Vehicle and Infrastructure Projects

January 18, 1:00 - 2:30 PM ET

There are many types of projects eligible for Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement (CMAQ) Program funding. Hear from two Metropolitan Planning Organizations about using CMAQ funding for alternative fuel vehicle projects. Jim Stack from Genesee Transportation

Council will describe partnering with a Clean Cities coalition to support the deployment of nearly 150 propane, compressed natural gas (CNG), and electric drive vehicles. By partnering with Genesee Region Clean Communities, the program benefited from a fuel neutral organization's knowledge about the new technologies and relationships with the private sector. Jeff Sheffield from North Florida Transportation Planning Organization will talk about hosting the North Florida Clean Fuels Coalition and the importance of alternative fuel vehicles in their region. By utilizing CMAQ funding, they have installed electric vehicle charging stations, helped convert a county fleet to CNG, and purchased CNG conversion kits for sanitation trucks.

U.S. Water Alliance Webinar Series: One Water Roadmap

January 30, 2:30-4:00 PM ET

The U.S. Water Alliance's first installment of a webinar series highlighting each of the six Arenas for Action featured in the **One Water Roadmap** will delve into how water utilities are advancing One Water management strategies to improve reliability and resiliency. Featuring representatives from Brown and Caldwell and LA Sanitation, this webcast will discuss how leading utilities are using One Water approach to create efficiencies in service delivery, achieve water quality and environmental improvements, and diversify and stretch a community's water supplies. Two recently published documents, U.S. Water Alliance's **One Water Roadmap**, and WRF's **Blueprint for One Water** will be showcased as practical tools for utilities seeking to implement a One Water framework.

Draft Agenda Available! 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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