



EXECUTIVE NOTE

Colleagues,

On behalf of NARC staff, thank you to all that made the 2018 National Conference of Regions a big success. As many attendees kept mentioning, this conference could not have been timelier. On the first full day of the conference, the Trump administration released both its official infrastructure proposal and fiscal year 2019 budget proposal. These new documents framed many of the conversations in our conference sessions, as members and speakers alike discussed the local implications of the new infrastructure plan and federal budget proposals.

Here are a few highlights from the conference:

- A congressional breakfast briefing in the heart of the Capitol where we discussed the new infrastructure proposal and the role regions play in creating opportunities and solving problems;
- An intimate conversation about local mitigation efforts for natural disasters and concerns about preemption of local authority for the new FirstNet program;
- A discussion on water policy priorities and issues in 2018, including how federal investment might affect the work local governments are doing to improve their water and wastewater systems;
- An interactive presentation about the urban-rural divide and inclusive, equitable strategies for bridging that gap;
- Santa Monica Councilwoman Pam O'Connor, NARC's new energy and environment committee chair, led a discussion on the National League of Cities' Sustainable Cities Institute, coastal management programs, and resiliency;
- National Association of Counties Executive Director Matt Chase provided us with some words of wisdom regarding the political environment and urged local leaders to stay engaged in the political process;

- Congresswoman Elizabeth Esty (CT) emphasized the importance of infrastructure investment and urged local leaders to share their stories at home and on Capitol Hill; and
- NARC convened a successful peer exchange for member communications, public affairs, and government affairs staff.

Please look at our [conference webpage](#) for links to conference presentations, [photos on Facebook](#), and the great exposure NARC received from *Route Fifty*. For even more conference coverage, search the hashtag [#RegionsLead](#) on Twitter.

Thank you again to everyone who joined us in Washington. We look forward to seeing you again June 3-6 in Orlando, Florida for our **52nd Annual Conference and Exhibition!**

Sincerely,

Leslie Wollack

NEWS FROM WASHINGTON

Congress will return February 26.

The President's Budget Proposal: Bad News All-Around

On February 12, President Donald Trump released his **fiscal year 2019 budget proposal**. The \$4.4 trillion budget would make substantial changes to mandatory programs (62 percent of all spending), including SNAP, Medicare and Medicaid, and a wide range of non-defense discretionary programs (32 percent of all spending).

Overall, the president proposed \$647 billion for defense spending – the level established by Congress for fiscal year 2019 – and \$540 billion for non-defense discretionary (NDD) spending – \$57 billion less than Congress set for fiscal year 2019 and nothing close to parity between defense and NDD funding levels.

If the president's budget were adopted by Congress, many programs important to regions would be slashed and funds once available to regions through the federal government to address housing, transportation, health, workforce, energy, and other programs would not be available.

- U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) – Funding would be cut by 19 percent, including the elimination of TIGER and New Starts funding.
- Economic Development Administration (EDA) – Funding would be reduced to zero.
- Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) – Funding would be cut by 34 percent and some of the most draconian funding cuts would be for clean air (47 percent), clean water (22 percent), and Brownfields (36 percent).
- U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) – Funding would be reduced by only two percent; however, most of the cuts would come from programs dealing with energy and water development and alternative energy sources, while most of the increases in funding would be for fossil energy programs and national nuclear security activities.
- U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) – Funding would be cut by 18 percent. The Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program would be eliminated and housing assistance would be cut by 11 percent. Equally consequential, low-income households that receive housing support would now have to pay 35 percent of their income for housing, rather than the current 30 percent.
- Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) – Funding would be cut by nearly nine percent, with the largest cut coming out of the Federal Disaster Assistance program (13 percent).
- U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) – Funding would be cut by 21 percent, including 40 percent cuts to youth workforce training programs and 54 percent for dislocated workers programs.
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) would be cut by 21 percent and would include the elimination of the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program.
- Changes to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) would be so significant that tens of thousands of unemployed and underemployed households would be taken off the program.

To no surprise, the president's budget was met with a resounding thud. But one should not write-off the budget so quickly. Many of the Speaker's priorities have been included in this budget proposal, including cuts to entitlement programs – especially Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) – where serious consideration would be given to impose work requirements on households that receive social benefits. Of course, Congress has not yet passed a final appropriations bill for FY2018, so enacting the president's proposed course of action for FY2019 is unlikely to happen anytime soon.

Trump Endorses 25-Cent Increase on Federal Gas Tax

At a meeting with lawmakers last Wednesday, Trump reportedly supported the idea of raising the federal gas tax by 25 cents-per-gallon. This comes just days after the administration released its **\$1.5 trillion infrastructure plan**, which left a lot of lawmakers questioning how the federal government would provide its portion of the funding. The U.S. Chamber of Commerce, who has publicly backed this idea, says that a 25-cent hike phased in over five years could raise an additional \$375 billion over 10 years. If the administration follows through and lawmakers support this increase, it could generate billions of dollars in new revenue and help the shrinking Highway Trust Fund stay afloat.

Lawmakers Push to Include Digital in Infrastructure Plans

As discussion continues on the administration's new infrastructure plan, lawmakers from both parties push to keep digital infrastructure in the conversation. Whether it be hardening our electric grid or providing broadband to all communities, Representative Ted Lieu (D-CA) says that "we need to invest in digital capacity as much as in concrete." Texas Representative Will Hurd (R-TX) has said digital infrastructure will help improve healthcare through telemedicine and strengthen border security through fiber optic cables on the U.S.-Mexico border. Some suggest paying for digital infrastructure through a tax on broadband service, while others suggest using the models of institutions like the North American Development Bank, which uses a mix of public and private funds to finance infrastructure projects.

OTHER NEWS

NARC to Co-Host Hill Briefing on Resilience in America's Coastal Communities

NARC and the Environmental and Energy Study Institute (EESI) invite you to a briefing to discuss climate/weather risks to America's coastal communities and the types of resilience plans local governments and regional partnerships are developing to safeguard their residents, built assets, and economies. The briefing will explore current and future infrastructure challenges facing public officials and how the federal government fits into the pursuit of these shared development goals. Hear from Steve Walz, director of environmental programs at Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments, and others as they discuss their resiliency plans [this Thursday, February 22, at 2:00 PM ET](#).

Florida Shooting Reopens CDC Gun Research Debate

Following the tragic mass shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida last week, a debate in Congress has reopened about loosening the long-standing restriction on the Centers for Disease Control's (CDC) research into gun violence. Democrats have been fighting against these restrictions since their enactment in 1996. Although Republicans have historically supported this CDC restriction, Health and Human Services Secretary Alex Azar and a few House Republicans have shown a willingness to allow CDC to investigate the causes of gun violence.

REGION SPOTLIGHT

San José Making Climate Action Affordable for Low-Income Residents

San José, California released one of the **first municipal climate plans in the U.S.** last week. Climate Smart San José has two primary goals: (1) providing 100 percent emission-free electricity to all members of the city's **community choice energy program** by 2021, and (2) reducing carbon emissions from vehicle trips by one million tons-per-year by 2030. Reduced energy and water consumption and targeted solar installations will help keep costs down for low-income residents. Feedback from more than 2,000 residents went into creating this plan, which includes community playbooks for citizens and businesses that wish to be more sustainable.

Interested in Broadband? Join Next Century Cities.

Next Century Cities is a nonprofit, public interest initiative that supports townships, cities, and counties across the country as they seek to ensure that everyone has fast, affordable, and reliable internet access. There is no membership – all that is required is for a city or county official to send an email to deb@nextcenturycities.org stating they want to join and that they agree to the organization's **six shared principles**. For cities and counties that are interested in broadband, Next Century Cities provides the following to their members:

- Elevate the conversation locally and nationally - facilitating speaking opportunities, op-eds, coverage of milestones and stories, conversations with DC politicians and FCC Commissioners - giving local leaders the opportunity to stand together on issues of importance.
- Support members by connecting folks from one city to another who may be doing similar work, giving all members the benefit of the experience of those who have gone before. Topics include marketing, funding, dig once policies, telling the story, etc. They have events, monthly calls on topics of importance, regular updates, and opportunities to learn and share.
- Equip members with toolkits, best practices, sample RFIs, and policies - curating and creating good content so members do not have to do all the research on their own.

MEMBER REQUESTS

Annual Conference Agenda

This survey includes topics generated from the brainstorming session at the Executive Directors Conference. Please take five minutes to provide your preferences so we can prioritize and structure the agenda.

FEATURED JOBS

[View full list of jobs!](#)

Senior Transportation Analyst

The Puget Sound Regional Council, Seattle, WA

Program Manager, Transportation Funding

The Puget Sound Regional Council, Seattle, WA

Executive Director

San Diego Association of Governments, San Diego, CA

Senior Planner, Transit

Stanislaus Council of Governments, Modesto, CA

Senior Transportation Planner

Stanislaus Council of Governments, Modesto, CA

Data Scientist

Spokane Regional Transportation Council, Spokane, WA

FUNDING

[View full list of grants!](#)

NOAA Coastal Resilience Grants

Pre-Proposals Due: March 7

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) Coastal Resilience Grants program implements projects that build resilient U.S. coastal communities and ecosystems. This program is intended to build resilience through projects that conserve and restore sustainable ecosystem processes and functions – as well as reduce the vulnerability of coastal communities and infrastructure from the impacts of extreme weather events, climate hazards, and changing ocean conditions.

2019 National Urban and Community Forestry Grant Program

Applications Due: April 30

Towns, cities, and regions are encouraged to conduct tree canopy assessments or tree inventories, set community forest goals and policies, and adopt management plans to promote consistent, stable forest management programs. Research, studies, technology, and policy development are needed to better understand and monitor current forestry threats, diminish tree loss, maintain forest health, and sustain a community's forest ecological services. Proposals may include, but are not limited to, networks of diverse communities and scientists that will integrate threats such as flooding, extreme heat, and drought. Social and policy studies can help reveal the institutional best practices needed for threat prevention, response, and citizen engagement.

EVENTS

View full list of events!

One Water for America Policy Framework Webinar 4: Blend Public and Private Expertise and Investment to Address Water Infrastructure Needs

February 21, 1:00 – 2:00 PM ET

Public-private partnerships have been in practice for generations. For years, many publicly-owned utilities have worked with private companies on planning, design, project delivery, operations, maintenance, and management. In addition, private water utilities account for about 15 percent of the U.S. water market. But public-private partnerships can be a mystery to the unfamiliar, and greater understanding is needed on how best to blend public and private resources for positive outcomes. While private expertise and investment can hold promise, each community is unique, and partnership decisions must be made locally. For the nation to attract more investment and innovation to water management, we need to address barriers to putting private money and expertise to work, while making sure that communities' needs are met and all partners benefit. Join us for part four of a seven-part series diving into each of the **Seven Big Ideas** in the **One Water for America Policy Framework**.

Five Percent Less: How to Reduce Your Carbon Footprint

February 21, 2:00 PM ET

Energy costs are on the rise and the importance of efficiency is on everyone's mind. However, budgets do not compensate for the staff and resources needed for energy conservation. In this time of doing more with less, how can you and your team make a real difference and see noticeable improvements in your energy usage? That's where strategic energy planning is crucial. Join ICMA's strategic partner, Dude Solutions, as they discuss best practices for creating a simple, reliable, and strategic energy plan that will lay the foundation for reducing energy consumption and your carbon footprint. Here's what you can expect to take away from this presentation:

- A look at where the industry is now and where it's going.
- How to understand your current data profile for your present-day energy snapshot.
- A breakdown of what data, staff, and tools and more are missing.
- Insight into goals, communication strategies, and future growth.

EPA's Watershed Management Optimization Support Tool (WMOST)

February 21, 3:00 – 4:00 PM ET

EPA's **WMOST is a publicly available tool** for state and local managers to screen a wide-range of options for cost-effective management of water resources. It supports a broader integrated watershed management (IWM) approach by allowing the user to simultaneously consider stormwater, drinking water, wastewater, and land conservation management practices. Users can select from three versions of WMOST based on their specific management needs. The first version focuses on management of base and peak flows, the second adds a flooding module to assess costs associated with peak flows, and the third includes a water quality module. WMOST aids in evaluating the environmental and economic costs, benefits, trade-offs and co-benefits of various management options, and can facilitate the evaluation of low impact development and green infrastructure management options that are suitable for projects using State Revolving Funds. Webinar participants will be introduced to the tool and its functions, and how it has been applied in two case studies.

Building Healthy Places: Strategies for Partnership Development in Rural Counties

April 12, 1:45 – 3:00 PM ET

Neighborhood structure and the built environment are both social determinants of health that

play a critical role on the wellbeing and equity of a community. Forming strong cross-collaborative partnerships in the community development sector is a key strategy in building and maintaining a safe, healthy and equitable community, especially in rural neighborhoods where human and capital resources are lacking. Join NACo and The Build Healthy Places Network for an informational webinar that highlights the importance of forming collaborative partnerships with community development sectors in rural communities and will explore strategies and tools to guide this process.

CONTACT US

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