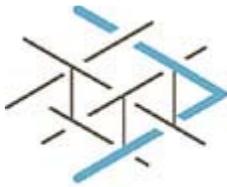


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NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF REGIONAL COUNCILS

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eRegions

EXECUTIVE BRIEF

Colleagues,

First and foremost, we hope everyone is safe. The winter storm affected a large portion of the country yesterday, including our NARC offices that closed along with the Federal Government.

The President's 2015 budget proposal was released this morning, and NARC staff has begun to work on section-specific summaries that are pertinent to our members. Stay tuned to our website for those details; we will get them out as quickly as possible.

Later this week, you'll see the wrap-up of our February conference and the launch of our June Annual Conference to be held in Louisville. Be on the lookout for both emails.

POLICY UPDATE REGIONS 360 GRANT OPPORTUNITIES UPCOMING EVENTS

NARC Visits DVRPC, Philadelphia, PA: This week, NARC visited the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC) to meet with Executive Director Barry Seymour and his staff, and to attend their Board of Directors meeting. One of the more notable Board actions was the approval of an innovative analysis tool that has been under development by DVRPC for some time. The purpose is to allow DVRPC to analyze projects of all types (bike, pedestrian, road, etc.) for multiple planning purposes (short term, long term, and congestion mitigation planning), using the same underlying tool. This tool helps expound a project's value, while also increasing public awareness and understanding. Though this tool is only one of many they will use in project selection, it's easy to see that a consistent measure of project value and benefit will help improve their prioritization and decision-making process.

NARC also met with DVRPC staff to learn about their approach to planning, plan development, project analysis, data and performance measurement, freight, economic and community development, and food system analysis. DVRPC does a remarkable job integrating a wide variety of issues into their work; they consider the impact of their work together rather than as isolated projects. DVRPC staff does this in a relatively challenging environment; working over the boundaries of both Pennsylvania

Until then, if there's anything you need from NARC, just let us know.

Best,
Lindsey

NARCLEADERSHIP

President

Hon. Penny Gross

Supervisor,
Fairfax County, VA

Chair Jim Hassinger,

Executive Directors Council
Executive Director,
Southwestern Pennsylvania
Commission

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Anna Rosenbaum

Communications Associate

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Director of Transportation
Programs

and New Jersey, contending with two Departments of Transportation (DOTs) and two governors. *Our thanks to DVRPC for hosting us.*

POLICYUPDATE

Congress is in session.

President Obama Releases FY15 Budget: Today, President Obama released his fiscal year (FY) 2015 budget, requesting \$3.901 trillion. Click [HERE](#) to access the budget and related documents. In next week's *eRegions*, NARC will release a budget summary highlighting programs critical to regions and local governments.

President Calls for More Spending, Regional Planning: In a speech in Minnesota yesterday, President Obama reiterated his support for a longer transportation bill with more spending, calling for a four-year bill worth \$302 billion (B). The speech itself was short on specifics, but the White House separately released a fact sheet that outlined the President's proposal in more detail. The proposal highlights an additional \$63B in funding to shore up the highway trust fund (HTF) – through a one-time transfer of “transition revenue” from “pro-growth business tax reform” – and a focus on “fix it first” projects. More details on the proposal were made available today as part of the President's budget release.

Of the \$302B, the President would provide \$199B for highways and another \$7B for highway and road safety; \$72B for transit systems including light rail, street cars, and bus rapid transit (BRT); \$19B for dedicated rail funding, including \$5B for “high performance and passenger rail programs”; and \$9B in competitive funding, including \$5B for *Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery* (TIGER) grants and \$4B to “incentivize innovation and local policy reforms to encourage better performance, productivity, and cost-effectiveness in our transportation systems.” He would also fund items under his *Ladders of Opportunity* initiative, including dedicated BRT funding for fast growing regions, workforce development opportunities, and a \$10B dedicated multimodal freight program. There is also a significant section focused on boosting efficiency and increasing return for taxpayers, including improved project delivery,

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incentivizing resilient communities, and increasing private investment.

The President also gave a nod to regional planning and local decision making. The White House fact sheet states: “The proposal includes policy reforms to incentivize improved regional coordination and strengthen local decision making in allocating Federal funding so that local communities can better realize their vision for improved mobility.” It remains to be seen how the President would implement this vision in policy, but it is a sentiment we can appreciate.

The White House fact sheet can be found [HERE](#), the President’s budget [HERE](#), and U.S. House Committee on Ways and Means proposal with NARC President Penny Gross’ statement [HERE](#).

House Budget Chair Releases Report on Federal Anti-Poverty Programs; Seen as Budget Precursor: On March 3, House Budget Committee Chairman Paul Ryan (R-WI) released a 200-page assessment of the effectiveness of 92 federal programs aimed at alleviating poverty. Ryan’s report finds mixed success for job training, housing, nutrition, energy, veterans, and other programs. The report is believed to be a precursor to a House budget proposal Ryan is expected to offer by the end of the month, despite the Chamber’s approval last December of top-line spending amounts for FY15. Senate Budget Chair Patty Murray is not expected to release a budget proposal of her own. The full text of Ryan’s report is available [HERE](#).

REGIONS360

CMAP Representative Testifies on Hearing for Improving the Nation’s Highway Freight Network: The Subcommittee on Highways and Transit, led by Chairman Tom Petri (R-WI), met on Thursday, February 27 to receive testimony related to highway freight mobility. The hearing focused on ways to improve the safety, efficiency, and reliability of the Nation’s highway freight network. “We support a more robust federal role in freight policy” testified Mayor Gerald R. Bennett (Palos Hills, IL), concerning the need for greater Federal investment in local transportation infrastructure. “It is time for the federal government to provide the leadership and resources to support a resilient national freight

network.” Bennett’s agency, the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, highlighted three principles for freight in the next transportation reauthorization bill. Those priorities include integrating metropolitan regions into the freight investment decision-making process, dedicating a range of funding sources, and authorizing a minimum of \$2B funding per year for freight investments, and redefining the national freight network to comprise a multimodal transportation system. Other participants – including FedEx Ground CEO Henry Maier, Volvo Senior Vice President Susan Alt, and Wisconsin State DOT Secretary Mark Gottlieb (speaking on behalf of the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials) – all echoed the need for more federal funding and coordination for freight-related efforts.

GRANT OPPORTUNITIES

USDA – Conservation Innovation Grants

Deadline: March 7

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced \$15 million in funding available for Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG) to develop and accelerate conservation approaches and technologies on private agricultural and forest lands. Priority will be given to applications that relate to nutrient management, energy conservation, soil health, air quality, climate change, wildlife, economics, sociology, environmental markets, food safety, historically underserved groups, or assessments of past CIG projects. Click [HERE](#) for details.

FTA – \$24.9M for Zero-Emission Buses Across America

Deadline: March 10

The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) announced the availability of \$24.9 million through its brand new Low or No Emission Vehicle Deployment Program that will put a new generation of advanced, non-polluting transit buses on the road in communities nationwide. The funds are intended to encourage more widespread adoption of reliable “green energy” buses into transit fleets. Click [HERE](#) for the announcement, and [HERE](#) for related information.

EPA – Regional Pollution Prevention Program Offices

Deadline: March 11

Funding is available for Source Reduction Assistance Grants for

projects that reduce or eliminate pollution at the source. Funded projects will reduce greenhouse gases; reduce hazardous materials; increase resource conservation; promote efficient business practices; and support pollution prevention integration. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) anticipates having more than \$1 million in funding available in 2014. More information is available [HERE](#).

DOE - SunShot Incubator 9 Program

Application Deadline: March 13

As part of a new \$19 million investment in solar energy, the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) announced funding available under the SunShot Incubator 9 program. This program will focus on early-stage support for small companies, encouraging private-sector investment and seeking app and web developers from both inside and outside of the energy industry to zero in on reducing soft costs of solar adoption. More information is available [HERE](#).

EDA - Public Works and Economic Adjustment Assistance Programs

Deadlines: March 14; June 13 for funding cycle 4

The U.S. Department of Commerce's Economic Development Administration (EDA) is soliciting applications from applicants in rural and urban areas to provide investments that support construction, non-construction, technical assistance, and revolving loan fund projects under EDA's Public Works and Economic Adjustment Assistance programs. Grants and cooperative agreements made under these programs are designed to leverage existing regional assets and support the implementation of economic development strategies that advance new ideas and creative approaches to advance economic prosperity in distressed communities. EDA provides competitive, merit-based investments that support economic development, foster job creation, and attract private investment in economically distressed areas of the U.S. The full announcement is available [HERE](#).

National Science Foundation - Environmental Sustainability

Deadline: March 20

The Environmental Sustainability program supports engineering research that seeks to balance society's need to provide ecological protection and maintain stable economic conditions. Research in Environmental Sustainability typically considers long time horizons

and may incorporate contributions from the social sciences and ethics. There are four principal general research areas which are supported: Industrial Ecology, Green Engineering, Ecological Engineering, and Earth Systems Engineering. Click [HERE](#) to learn more.

Health Impact Assessment (HIA) Funding Opportunity

Proposal Deadline: April 2

The Health Impact Project, a collaboration of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and The Pew Charitable Trusts, has launched a call for proposals. HIA will help to identify and address likely benefits and risks of a decision made in a field outside of the health sector. Eligible organizations include nonprofits, state, local and tribal agencies, and educational institutions. Click [HERE](#) to read the proposal letter and [HERE](#) for application details.

EPA – Brownfields Activities

Deadline: April 18

The U.S. EPA announced funding available to conduct research or provide technical assistance to communities facing brownfields cleanup and revitalization challenges. Focus areas include technical assistance for workforce development, environmental justice, and financing strategies, as well as research on the benefits of brownfields redevelopment in brownfields-impacted communities. More information is available [HERE](#).

ETA – YouthBuild

Deadline: April 22

Approximately \$73 million to organizations to oversee the provision of education, occupational skills training, and employment services to disadvantaged youth in their communities while performing meaningful work and service to their communities. U.S. DOL hopes to serve approximately 4,950 participants during the grant period of performance, with approximately 75 projects awarded across the country. More information is available [HERE](#).

USDA – Farm to School Program

Deadline: April 30

The USDA announced several funding opportunities for *The Farm to School Grant Program*, a cornerstone of the USDA's *Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food Initiative*, which coordinates the Department's work on local and regional foods. More information

on these opportunities and a list of webinar dates about each program are available [HERE](#).

ETA – Ready to Work Partnership

Deadline: June 19

As part of President Obama’s “Opportunity for All” Agenda announced during the State of the Union address, the U.S. DOL ETA announced \$150 million available to local workforce development providers and programs through the *Ready to Work Partnership Grant Program*. The U.S. DOL expects to fund approximately 20-30 grants with individual grant amounts ranging from \$3 million to \$10 million. This grant program is designed to provide long-term unemployed workers with individualized counseling, training, and supportive and specialized services that lead to rapid employment in occupations and industries for which employers use H-1B visas to hire foreign workers. More information is available [HERE](#).

DOE – Solar Manufacturing Technology 2 (SolarMat 2)

Application Due: March 14, 2015

The U.S. DOE SunShot Initiative is providing funding to spur solar energy manufacturing and supply chain companies in the U.S., by aiding the development of innovative cost reducing and/or efficiency increasing technology into useable manufacturing equipment and processes. Click [HERE](#) for more information about available funding.

Climate Solutions University Accepting Applications

Application Deadline: Rolling

The Model Forest Policy Program is offering a special funding opportunity for qualifying U.S. urban and rural communities working together addressing ecosystem services. Urban decision makers need to plan for climate impacts that result from land changes beyond their jurisdictional boundaries. To find out more about the Climate Solutions University, click [HERE](#).

UPCOMINGEVENTS

CONFERENCE: Freight in the Southeast

March 3-6; Tampa, FL

The Institute for Trade and Transportation Studies, a regionally-focused organization that works on trade and transportation issues

in the southeast, is holding its annual trade conference and might be of interest to the area's metropolitan planning organizations and other transportation planners. For more information, click [HERE](#) or contact Bruce Lambert at bruce@ittsresearch.org.

WEBINAR: Best Practices for Collaborating on Data Sharing and Data Analytics

March 6, 1:00 PM EST

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) would like you to join them for the next *Let's Talk Performance*. The ability to collect, store, access, and analyze data to use for transportation performance management decision making is an area of great concern for several of FHWA partners. This webinar will focus on sharing best practices being implemented in Texas, California, and Maryland concerning data collection, storage, and access, while also analyzing concerns related to the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP-21) performance provisions.

Click [HERE](#) to register.

New! WEBINAR: Scenario Planning and Fiscal Impact Modeling

March 10, 3:00-4:00 PM EST

The U.S. EPA Office of Sustainable Communities offers this webinar to explore how scenario planning and fiscal impact tools can support smart growth implementation at a range of scales through innovative methods, and how various communities can use fiscal impact analyses to support planning and economic development decisions. Registration and details are available

[HERE](#).

WEBINAR: The Challenge of Transportation Planning for Resilience

March 11, 11:30 AM EST

Join William Lyons, principal technical advisor in transportation planning at Volpe, for his talk on Transportation System Resilience Extreme Weather and Climate Change. Lyons leads Volpe support for the FHWA and FTA on regulatory reviews of transportation planning by states and metropolitan areas. The projects involve multi-disciplinary teams and significant collaboration with transportation planning and operating agencies at federal, state, regional, and local levels. Click [HERE](#) to register.

New! WEBINAR: Demonstrating an Economic Diversity Webtool

March 11, 2014; 3:00-4:00 PM EST

Initially developed for the Appalachian Regional Commission, this webtool provides a set of county-level diversity metrics for the entire U.S. designed to help practitioners and policymakers understand and explore key concepts related to economic diversity. This tool will allow users to analyze their community's economic health, diversity, opportunities and risks, and standing versus other similar communities - designed to support all economic development planning. Registration and details are available [HERE](#).

New! WEBINAR: Community Solar Program Development & Implementation

March 12, 3:00-4:00 PM EST

Lead authors of *The Utility Community Solar Handbook* and utility community solar program representatives from the Delaware Municipal Electric Corporation will discuss community solar program development and implementation from the utility's perspective. Click [HERE](#) to register.

New! WEBINAR: Solar Energy Solutions for Transportation: Improving Air Quality and Saving Fuel with Idle Reduction Technology

March 25, 2:00-3:00 PM EST

Join us for NARC's first solar transportation webinar focused on improving air quality and fuel consumption through the use of solar technology in trucking. The average heavy-duty truck uses up to 2,500 gallons of fuel per year idling, driving up transportation costs, and producing thousands of pounds of greenhouse gas emissions. We will explore the regulatory and market forces behind the demand for idle reduction technologies, and review innovative solar powered idle reduction systems as a cleaner and more cost effective alternative. Click [HERE](#) to register.

REGIONAL WORKSHOP: Solar in Western Kentucky

March 27, 10:00-3:00 PM CT

Local governments interested in learning about how to make their community solar ready in Western Kentucky are invited to a free workshop sponsored by the U.S. Department of Energy's SunShot Solar Outreach Partnership, Green River Area Development

District, and NARC. The workshop will provide actionable information on creating local –level solar policies and permitting processes. Areas of focus include: the benefits and barriers of solar development in your region; creating solar friendly planning and zoning codes and ordinances; and innovative financing options for solar projects. To register and learn more, click [HERE](#).

CONFERENCE: NARC's 48th Annual Conference and Exhibition

June 6-11, Louisville, KY

The Annual Conference and Exhibition is the largest national event focused on promoting effective regional cooperation and solutions through interaction and education. Held annually in June, NARC's Annual Conference is the premier place to learn how to engage in effective regional collaboration. Additional information will be available in early 2014.

CONFERENCE: Ohio Conference on Freight

September 18-19, Hyatt Regency Columbus, OH

This conference addresses the reality that economic growth will increasingly depend upon or be at the mercy of our freight infrastructure. Key goals of the conference include: building professional capacity in all aspects of freight transport by disseminating best practices in supply chain and logistics; strengthening the ability of the public and private sectors to effectively plan, build, and maintain an efficient transportation network; examining and informing state and federal policies that support freight related economic development. Also, professional engineers can claim professional development hours [PDH]. For more information contact Christine Drennen, Conference Director (419.241.9155 ext. 119 or drennen@tmacog.org) or visit www.ohiofreight.org for more info.

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