



EXECUTIVE NOTE

Dear NARC Members,

Registration is now open for **NARC's 49**th **Annual Conference and Exhibition** in Raleigh, North Carolina from June 7-10! This year, plan to join us early to attend optional mobile workshops on Sunday afternoon at 1:30 PM, as well as a fun opening reception at the Marbles Kids Museum Sunday evening at 6:00 PM. You'll also want to stick around for our **NARC Awards Gala Dinner** on Tuesday evening at 6:30 PM. We've extended our awards deadline to this Friday, March 27 — so there's still time to submit!

Thanks, Joanna Turner

News from Washington

Both the House and the Senate are in session this week

FY16 Budget Resolutions

This week, both the Senate and House will consider their budget resolutions for FY 2016. These floor actions follow last week's party-line votes in the House and Senate Budget Committees. The Senate budget resolution, scheduled for floor consideration today, would cut \$4.3 trillion in mandatory spending and \$97 billion from discretionary programs over the next 10 years. The House budget, scheduled for floor consideration on Tuesday, reduces spending by \$5.5 trillion over the next 10 years and includes a repeal of the *2010 Affordable Care Act*. Clearly, the two plans have significant differences, although both chambers' budget plans keep sequester cuts (agreed to in PL 112-25) for discretionary programs intact, while attempting to increase funding for defense through other budgetary mechanisms.

NARC Sends Local Government Coalition Letter on Ozone to EPA Docket

On March 17th, NARC, along with the U.S. Conference of Mayors, the National Association of Counties and the National League of Cities, sent a **letter** to the docket responding to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) **Draft Documents Related to the Review of the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) for Ozone**. In the letter, the organizations request that EPA delay implementation of a stricter ozone standard until the 2008 standard can be fully implemented.

BLM Issues Final Rule for Fracking on Public Lands

On Friday, the U.S. Department of Interior Bureau of Land Management (BLM) released a **final rule** on hydraulic fracturing - "fracking" - on federal lands, which represent about a quarter of the country's current fossil-fuel output. Through the rule, BLM aims to lower the risk of water contamination from fracking, by subjecting companies that drill on public lands to stricter design standards for wells and holding tanks where liquid wastes are stored. The rule requires that oil and natural gas operators publicly disclose the chemicals used for drilling within 30 days of completing a well. The new requirements will take effect 30 days after publication in the *Federal Register*.

House T&I Introduces Disaster Assistance Reform Bill

The House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure introduced the *FEMA Disaster Assistance Reform Act of 2015* (HR 1471) last week. The bill reauthorizes the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) at current funding levels until FY 2018 and includes several reforms to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of disaster assistance programs. The bill reinstates a three-year statute of limitations on FEMA's ability to reclaim funds on certain projects previously determined eligible. The legislation also authorizes the Urban Search and Rescue Response System through FY 2018 at current funding levels, and reauthorizes the Emergency Management Assistance Compacts Grants through FY 2018 at current funding levels. Committee mark-up is scheduled for March 25.

President Signs Executive Order to Cut Government Emissions

Last Thursday, March 19, President Obama signed an **executive order** to reduce the federal government's greenhouse gas emissions by up to 40 percent by 2025, largely through improved energy efficiency in federal buildings and vehicles. The order also increases the share of electricity the U.S. Federal Government consumes from renewable sources to 30 percent. Fourteen major federal suppliers simultaneously unveiled similar pledges to reduce their emissions and improve energy efficiency in their operations.

White House Announces Movement on Broadband Initiative

Today, the White House announced progress on a new initiative to increase broadband investment and reduce barriers to deployment and adoption of broadband. The Broadband Opportunity Council includes 25 federal agencies to work with industry seeking ways to support community needs.

Increased Funding for TIGER Urged through Senate Letter

Last week, Senators Patty Murray (D-WA) and Dick Durbin (D-IL) urged their Senate colleagues to sign a letter supporting funding for the Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) program. The letter emphasizes the 342 projects worth \$4.1 billion that have been funded through the program since its creation in 2009, and requests "robust funding" for TIGER in the fiscal year 2016 appropriations bill.

OTHER NEWS

Broadband Adoption: U.S. County Map

The data reported to the Federal Communication Commission indicates approximatyely 72 million fixed residential broadband connections at the end of 2013, with about 60 fixed broadband connections per 100 households nationwide. Hawaii had the highest adoption rate. This map provides county level broadband adoption rates across the U.S. as of December 31, 2013.

Local Issues Before the Supreme Court

Update on Supreme Court cases impacting local governments from the State and Local Legal Center, representing the Big Seven national organizations representing state and local governments.

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

Environmental Justice with SCAG

The Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) is holding workshops concerning their environmental justice analysis process for their upcoming 2016-2040 Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy. Environmental Justice is about equal and fair access to a healthy environment, with the goal of protecting underrepresented and poorer communities from incurring disproportionate environmental impacts. The SCAG region is demographically and economically diverse, and displays extremes in household income. The region includes heavily urban and entirely rural areas, as well as terrain that in some instances make achieving air quality goals challenging. This year is also SCAG's 50th Anniversary — Happy Birthday to the nation's largest metropolitan planning organization, representing six counties, 191 cities, and more than 18 million residents!

FEATURED JOBS

View full list of jobs!

Executive Director

Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, Chicago, IL

Chief Transportation Planner

Tri-County Regional Planning Commission, Lansing, MI

Transportation Planning Technician

Tri-County Regional Planning Commission, Lansing, MI

Contracts and Procurement Analyst

San Diego Association of Governments, San Diego, CA

EVENTS

View full list of events!

New FEMA Disaster Grant Obligations Process Webinar

April 1, 4:00 PM ET April 2, 4:00 PM ET April 6, 4:00 PM ET

FEMA recently implemented a program enhancement to record Public Assistance and Hazard Mitigation Grant Program funds at the project level. This change sets controls to prevent overdrawing and adds more transparency to the drawdown process for both FEMA and the grant recipient. FEMA will now be able to provide more regular reports, which will improve the accuracy of the quarterly reporting process. Each webinar will give an overview of the system

changes and provide instruction on how to use the new interface.

WIFIA Webinar

April 1, 1:00 - 4:00 PM ET

EPA is holding a webinar to discuss the next steps for implementation of the *Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act* (WIFIA). WIFIA is part of the *2014 Water Resources Reform and Development Act* and is designed to provide subsidized funding for large dollar-value projects related to water infrastructure. This webinar will discuss eligibility, project types, and subsidy level for various projects under WIFIA and will include a virtual Q&A with the moderator.

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