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NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF REGIONAL COUNCILS

VOL. XIV, No. 11, March 31, 2014

eRegions

EXECUTIVE BRIEF

Colleagues,

NARC staff was in Kentucky last week for another successful SolarOPs workshop. Thank you to our local hosts – the GRADD and their five area development district partners – for their hospitality and assistance in making this event tremendously successful. More details are available in our program update. *Our next workshop is on May 16th in Starkville, Mississippi.*

Staff continues to meet with the U.S. House of Representatives T&I Committee Staff and the

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PROGRAM UPDATE

NARC's First Solar Transportation Webinar: NARC in partnership with the SunShot Solar Outreach Partnership (SolarOPs) completed its first solar transportation webinar last Tuesday. North Central Texas Council of Governments and eNOW, Inc. discussed improving air quality and fuel consumption through the use of solar technology for idle reduction in trucking. The webinar highlighted the challenges of meeting idle reduction standards, local government implementations,

U.S. Senate EPW Committee Staff to discuss general principles and specific changes the organization would like to see in the next reauthorization. We started monthly feedback sessions for our members in February, to prepare for this reauthorization. NARC has put together a list of recommendations, but we still need more feedback from membership. Click [HERE](#) to register and to learn more about these member-only feedback sessions.

Have a great week!
Lindsey

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and restrictions. The webinar concluded with a detailed analysis of a solar technology system and how it can be used as a viable alternative for communities to meet idle reduction standards. This webinar was the first in a series of NARC solar transportation webinars that will focus on incorporating solar energy into the transportation industry. Click [HERE](#) for a copy of the webinar and further information.

Western Kentucky Solar Workshop: Last week, over 80 local government officials, businesses, and private citizens attended the Western Kentucky Solar workshop sponsored by the U.S. Department of Energy's SolarOps, the Green River Area Development District (GRADD), and NARC. National and local presenters discussed the current state of solar in Kentucky, solar financing options, and highlighted several local solar projects in the region. Davies County Judge-Executive Al Mattingly, summed up the workshop perfectly, "why would you not want to rely on an unlimited supply of energy?" Visit <http://gradd.org/> for workshop information or [HERE](#) for more information on NARC's solar work.

Previous NARC Intern Releases Worker Training Programs

Report: Dusty Russell recently authored a report, *Minority Worker Training Program: Guidance on How to Achieve Successes and Best Practices*, made available to the public in time for the National Environmental Justice Conference. It assesses and highlights the *NIEHS Minority Worker Training Program* as a model for worker training programs in disadvantaged communities. Click [HERE](#) to view the full report.

April is National County Government Month: Each April celebrates the National County Government Month to raise public awareness and understanding about the roles and responsibilities of county government. This year's theme is – *Ready and Resilient Counties: Prepare. Respond. Thrive*. Click [HERE](#) for more information.

POLICYUPDATE

Congress is in session.

Appropriations Committees Hold FY15 Hearings: The House and Senate Appropriations Committees are scheduled to hold hearings and some markups this week for the fiscal year (FY) 2015 spending bills. The hearings will highlight agency heads and review the President's

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NARC Calls for Increase in Housing and Transportation

Appropriations: NARC and a coalition of thousands of housing and transportation advocates called on Congress to increase funding for the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT). The letter requests increasing 302(b) allocations to the respective appropriations subcommittees on Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies (THUD) for FY15. The level of these allocations to the THUD subcommittees directly influences the availability of funds for local priorities, such as the *Community Development Block Grant*. The THUD allocation has dropped by over 25 percent since 2010. Click **HERE** to read the letter.

House T&I to Hold Disaster Mitigation Hearing: This week the U.S. House of Representatives Transportation & Infrastructure Committee (T&I) will hold a hearing entitled “Disaster Mitigation: Reducing Costs and Savings Lives,” at 10am on Thursday, April 3. The hearing will focus on what local communities and individuals can do to reduce their risks, lower costs, and protect their homes and families, including preparation and planning. Click **HERE** for more information.

Highway Account of HTF Could Default in July: Previous estimates showed the highway account of the Highway Trust Fund (HTF) running out of money in August or September, and the transit account not too long after that. The newest estimate from the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) has the highway account becoming insolvent in July. Since federal law prohibits the HTF from running a deficit, the agency will have to wait for gas tax revenues to come in before payments will be allowed to go out. Instead of daily payments to states, payments would instead be made several times a week, or even weekly. We anticipate that most states are preparing for this potential outcome, as the writing has been on the wall for a long time. Still there will be negative consequences, especially if the situation continues on for an extended period.

Hearing: MAP-21 Reauthorization, State and Local Perspectives, on Transportation Priorities and Funding: The U.S. Senate Committee on Environment & Public Works held a hearing today regarding the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP-21) reauthorization based on state and local perspectives

concerning priorities and funding. The Committee invited a diverse group of witnesses to give testimony and answer questions. The witness list included Director Michael Lewis of the Rhode Island DOT, Deputy Secretary Sue Minter of the Vermont Agency of Transportation, Indianapolis Mayor Greg Ballard, Oklahoma City Mayor Mick Cornett, President Bill Fontenot of St. Landry's Parish in Louisiana, Chairman Jim Willox of the Converse County Commission in Wyoming, and Principal Planner Dave Gula of the Wilmington Area Planning Council in Delaware.

Chairman Barbara Boxer (D-CA) began the hearing by discussing the condition of the HTF (above). Chairman Boxer expressed hope that Congress would be able to come together to pass a six year bill before insolvency sets in, to provide some stability moving forward. A common theme among all the witnesses was the notion that a shortfall in the HTF would be disastrous, and that that there would be serious consequences for everyone – local, state, and federal – if this situation is allowed to drag on. Witnesses emphasized how this predicament has already had a negative impact on projects. Michael Lewis, Director of Rhode Island DOT, pointed out his state's overwhelming reliance on federal funds (they have no state-level highway program), which has forced them to stop advertising for bids on new projects. Mayor Ballard highlighted the effectiveness of *the Transportation Alternatives Program* (TAP); the need to keep the decision-making in the hands of locals; and the importance of encouraging walking, bicycling, and transit. Mayor Cornett discussed the need for better streamlining and highlighted the negative consequences of "agency overreach." Also highlighted were off-system bridges, local control, and the competitive *Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery* (TIGER) Program.

REGIONS360

Association of Central Oklahoma Governments Green Power: The City of Edmond has been designated Oklahoma's first Green Power Community by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in acknowledgement of their use of renewable energy. Almost 75% of the energy powering the City of Edmond's facilities is generated by wind energy technology. With just 51 designated Green Power Communities across 14 states, Edmond is the 11th most populous city to receive the designation and ranks 13th of those communities in annual green power usage per kilowatt hours. When ranked by the percentage of

green power as part of total electricity use, Edmond's 11.3% ranks higher than some significantly larger cities such as Portland (8.6%), Santa Clara (8.4%) and Philadelphia (4.7%). Read the full article [HERE](#).

SANDAG Recognized as Organization of the Year: The San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG) has been named "Organization of the Year" by the California Transportation Foundation (CTF), which recognizes excellence in all modes of transportation from all regions of the state, public, and private sector. The award will be given to SANDAG at the 25th Annual CTF Transportation Awards Luncheon to be held on May 22. In addition, several projects SANDAG built (with partner agencies) have been selected as finalists for other CTF awards, including State Route 905, Trolley Renewal, SR 76/I-15 interchange, and Integrated Corridor Management.

New Transportation Coalition Launches Alliance for American Competitiveness: A new business coalition led by Caterpillar Inc. Chairman and Chief Executive Officer Doug Oberhelman and former Mississippi Gov. Haley Barbour recently announced the launch of Alliance for American Competitiveness (AFAC) on March 24. AFAC will be dedicated to promoting economic growth through strategic infrastructure investment. According to a press release by Caterpillar Inc., "The coalition will be used to accomplish three goals – to inform lawmakers about the local and regional economic benefits of infrastructure investment; to advocate for a long-term stable revenue source for infrastructure investment; and, to define the broad economic impact of infrastructure investment." The Executive Board of the Alliance will be comprised of Caterpillar, Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway, Dow, Honeywell, and UPS. The formation of this group and its timing is related to the surface transportation legislation currently being considered for reauthorization by Congress.

SCAG Highlighted in *Environment & Energy Daily* Article on Freight: Planning chiefs from 13 major metropolitan areas are calling for the creation of a \$2-billion-per-year "Freight Trust Fund" as part of the next highway and transit bill. "Freight is the cornerstone of our national economy, and we believe the importance of adequately supporting our freight system grows every day," Hasan Ikhata, Executive Director of the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG), said in a letter co-signed by counterparts at a dozen other planning agencies, including those for the Chicago, Illinois;

Puget Sound, Washington; and Houston-Galveston, Texas metro regions. "It is time for the federal government to provide the leadership and resources to support a resilient national freight network."

MEMBERREQUEST

Our member organizations ask for your thoughtful reply. Please forward any feedback to Anna Rosenbaum, anna@narc.org.

NOACA – Crisis Communications Plans: The Northeast Ohio Areawide Coordinating Agency (NOACA) is seeking information from its peers on any crisis communications plans that you may have developed or are developing. NOACA is currently finalizing its own plan and would like to review best practices of such plans before finalizing its own. Specifically, does your agency possess a crisis communications plan that it would implement if a public relations crisis or controversy erupts?

GRANT OPPORTUNITIES

Click [HERE](#) to view the list of grants still open!

EPA – Smart Growth Information Clearinghouse

Proposal Deadline: May 12, 5:00 PM ET

Under this solicitation, The U.S. EPA intends to fund further development and ongoing maintenance of a web-based national information clearinghouse focused on smart growth. The clearinghouse will function as a "one stop shop" for the best information currently available on effective smart growth approaches that can help communities make development choices that deliver environmental, economic, and quality of life benefits. The clearinghouse will also serve as the virtual home of the Smart Growth Network (SGN), a nationally recognized coalition of leadership organizations that have formally endorsed the principles of smart growth. This request for proposals builds on Smart Growth Online, an information service currently supported through a competitively awarded assistance agreement that expires this summer (see www.smartgrowth.org). Click [HERE](#) to see the announcement.

UPCOMINGEVENTS

Click [HERE](#) to view the list of events still open!

WEBINAR: How the FAF Can Help You

April 10, 1:00 – 2:15 PM ET; Registration deadline April 7

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) will offer practitioners in state DOTs, metropolitan/regional planning organizations, and other agencies an overview of how the Freight Analysis Framework (FAF) can make a difference. FHWA will outline the FAF's main components and give examples of using the FAF for statewide and metropolitan level issues. This webinar is aimed at practitioners with basic or no knowledge of the FAF, but who would like to move to the next skill level. It will also provide a useful foundation for more advanced topics (e.g., linking FAF with county-level data, using FAF for statewide freight planning) that will be covered in future webinars. To register, click [HERE](#) by April 7.

SURVEY: Help Improve Scenario/Sketch Planning Tools for NHRCP

Deadline: April 11

Your assistance is requested in completing a 10-minute survey regarding your use of and experience with regional scenario/sketch planning tools. These tools include CommunityViz, Envision Tomorrow or Envision Tomorrow Plus (ET+), i-PLACE3S, INDEX or SPARC/INDEX, UPlan, UrbanFootprint, or other similar tools. The survey is being conducted as part of a National Cooperative Highway Research Program (NCHRP) project to review and evaluate these tools. The project will also provide guidance on their application and enhancement. Click [HERE](#) to take the survey.

WEBINAR: Keeping Pedestrians Safe in Urban and Suburban Communities

April 11, 2:00 PM ET

Pedestrian safety is on everyone's mind. This discussion forum will dive deeper into the topics presented at the March 20th webinar where Noah Budnick describes New York City's *Vision Zero Campaign*, working toward zero deaths, zero injuries, and zero fear of traffic. Michael King will discuss community design, specifically in suburban settings, and how it can have a positive or negative influence on pedestrian safety. Both Noah and Michael will be present at this discussion forum to answer your questions. This program is hosted by

America Walks and made possible with support from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, in partnership with the American Public Health Association. Click [HERE](#) to register.

WEBINAR: Putting the Mettle to the Pedal: Ideas for Promoting Bicycling

April 16, 2:00 PM ET

This webinar will feature two presentations: The first presentation will share one program's secrets for keeping its seven year old bike promotion program fresh and sustained, including event themes and bicycling field trips. The second presentation will talk about how they are engaging 6th grade students in bike safety and the key partners that have catapulted excitement for bicycling to new heights. This is the first of four webinars that will be presented by the National Center for Safe Routes to School. Click [HERE](#) to register.

WEBINAR: FHWA Programs and Policies to Advance Livability

APRIL 17, 1:00 PM ET

Sponsored by the FHWA Office of Human Environment, this webinar will help transportation practitioners better understand the potential benefits and challenges of programmatic and policy approaches for fostering livable communities. Presenters will discuss the evolution of Massachusetts DOT livability policies, associated implementation, and the development of livability policies and initiatives in Sandpoint, Idaho, a small town in transition. Click [HERE](#) to register.

WEBINAR: Strategies to Transform the Built Environment: Lighter, Quicker, Cheaper, and Healthier

April 17, 1:30 PM ET

An increasing number of communities are accelerating their progress through Lighter, Quicker, Cheaper (LQC) strategies to transform the built environment by taking incremental steps, using low-cost experiments, tapping into local talent, and paving the way towards longer term change. Presenters from the Project for Public Spaces, will address the importance of creating healthy places and a quick overview of placemaking. They will define LQC, outline design principles, and present several examples of communities that have used innovative, inexpensive "fixes" to improve health. This program is hosted by America Walks and made possible with support from Shaping New Jersey, the state partnership for nutrition, physical activity, and obesity prevention. Click [HERE](#) to register.

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. Click [HERE](#) for more information.

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