

April 18, 2016 [View this email in your browser](#)



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF REGIONAL COUNCILS

eREGIONS



NEWS FROM WASHINGTON

House and Senate are in session.

Overview

The Senate will wrap up deliberation on the Federal Aviation Administration reauthorization this week and is expected to take up the FY 17 Energy and Water Resources spending bill, beating the House which traditionally initiates spending bills.

The House will focus on a series of bills related to the IRS, include a bill barring employees from receiving bonuses until the agency puts a customer services strategy in place.

Federal Budget

Senate Budget Committee Chair Michael Enzi (R-WY) will submit overall spending limits for federal discretionary programs today, keeping the funding specified in last year's bipartisan budget agreement between Congress and the Administration. That deal provided \$1.07 billion in spending, keeping most local funding programs close to previous funding levels. House conservatives continue to object, wanting further cuts in discretionary spending, which would cut into many local programs such as housing and community development, transportation, water resources, and other key local government programs.

Even without a budget, the Senate is still moving ahead on individual spending bills - hoping to get them all enacted by the end of the fiscal year on September 30. Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell is promising to devote 12 weeks of floor time so that the Senate can enact all 12 regular spending bills. With elections limiting the number of days in session, the Senate would need to pass one spending bill each week to keep pace with this goal. This leaves very little time for controversial amendments that can tie up the Senate and delay passage.

The first bill up will be spending for Energy and Water Resources. The bill coming out of the Senate Appropriations Committee did not allow amendments on controversial issues – specifically, Waters of the U.S. environmental rule that extends federal clean water laws to wetlands and has been tied up in the courts. NARC joined with local government colleagues to oppose the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) rules until state and local governments are included in the rule development process.

Brownfields

In advance of a hearing on the EPA Brownfields program, Representative Paul Tonko (D-NY) invited NARC and other stakeholders to participate in a roundtable session on Brownfield cleanup. As the Ranking Member of the House Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Environment and the Economy, the Congressman expressed support for the regional role in brownfields cleanup and the federal role in redevelopment efforts.

Tonko noted the environmental, health, and economic value added to communities that clean up brownfield sites. The EPA's Brownfield Program has improved 44,200 acres of idle land now available for productive use.

The Subcommittee hearing, EPA's Brownfields Program: Empowering Cleanup and Encouraging Economic Redevelopment, chaired by Representative John Shimkus (R-IL) is scheduled for Thursday, April 21 at 10 a.m.

The Brownfields program provides grants and technical assistance to states, local communities, tribes, and other stakeholders in order to assess, cleanup, and restore once contaminated areas to beneficial use. Members will examine the many successes and also look at areas where the program could be improved. The subcommittee will hear from a panel of expert witnesses, including officials from EPA and the Association of the State and Territorial Solid Waste Management Officials. The **Majority Memorandum, witness list, and witness testimony will be posted** as they become available.

Advanced Copy of FHWA NPRM

Earlier today, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) released on its website a copy of the Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM) proposing national performance measures regarding performance of the National Highway System, Freight Movement on the Interstate System, and the CMAQ program. This is an advanced copy of the NPRM; the official version will be released this Friday, April 22. It is the third of three rules from FHWA establishing national measures of performance, and is by far the most extensive and far-reaching of the three. This rule will have implications for MPOs and for the planning process in general. NARC has started reviewing the rule, but this will be a LONG process. You can find the **current advanced copy** of the NPRM on the FHWA website. Please note that it is hundreds of pages long. Two important items related to the NPRM:

1. FHWA will hold a webinar on Thursday, April 21 from 1:00pm to 3:30pm ET. You are encouraged to **sign up for the webinar ASAP**, in the event there is a cap on the number of participants.
2. If you are interested in coordinating with NARC in the development of comments regarding this rule, please contact NARC Transportation Director Erich Zimmermann at **erich@narc.org**. We would like a group of COGs and MPOs we can reach out to as we develop our response to this massive rulemaking.

FEATURED JOBS

View full list of jobs!

Assistant Director of Purchasing

Los Angeles Department of Water and Power, Los Angeles, CA

Executive Director

Florida Transportation Commission, Tallahassee, FL

FUNDING

View full list of grants!

USDA Seeks Applications for Nearly \$12 Million in Broadband Grants for Rural Communities

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack announced today that the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is soliciting applications for grants to establish broadband in unserved rural communities through its Community Connect program. Community Connect is administered by USDA's Rural Utilities Service and helps to fund broadband deployment into rural communities where it is not economically viable for private sector providers to provide service. The minimum grant is \$100,000 for FY 2016; maximum award is \$3 million. See the **Federal Register notice** for more details.

Rural Broadband Access Loans and Loan Guarantees Program

Applications Due: July 7

The application period is now open for the Rural Broadband Access Loan and Loan Guarantee Program. The program furnishes loans and loan guarantees to provide funds for the costs of construction, improvement, or acquisition of facilities and equipment needed to provide service at the broadband lending speed in eligible rural areas. Loans under this authority will range from \$100,000 to \$10,000,000.

EVENTS

View full list of events!

How Trails Build Community & Economy Webinar

April 21, 3:00 - 4:00 PM ET

Many rural communities and small towns are rediscovering their recreational and scenic assets and looking for ways to leverage these assets to boost economic development and community pride. This webinar will highlight examples of rural trail projects that link people to place and reconnect the human and natural environments--providing access to nature and preserving sensitive ecosystems, while promoting local economic and cultural assets. You can submit questions in advance of the webinar.

System Performance/ Freight/CMAQ PM NPRM External Webinar

April 21, 1:00 - 3:30 PM ET

On Monday, April 18, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) released a copy of the Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM) to propose national performance management measure regulations to assess the performance of the National Highway System, Freight Movement on the Interstate System, and the Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program, as required by the MAP-21 and the *Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act*. The NPRM is scheduled for publication in the *Federal Register* on Friday, April 22.

2016 Sustainable Energy in America Factbook Congressional Briefing

April 29, 12:00 – 2:00 PM ET

Join the Environmental and Energy Study Institute and the Business Council for Sustainable Energy for a briefing on the release of the 4th edition of the ***Sustainable Energy in America Factbook***. The briefing will feature an overview presentation on the findings from the factbook,

followed by a moderated industry panel with senior executives from a range of clean energy industries. This briefing will be available by **webcast**.

NARC Awards! Application Period is Open

Deadline extended to April 29

NARC is accepting nominations for its 2016 Achievement and Leadership Awards, which will be presented at the Awards Gala Dinner during the 50th Annual Conference and Exhibition, June 26-29, in Salt Lake City, Utah. The awards provide an excellent opportunity for winners to promote their successes to a larger audience, as well as share best practices with their partners and peers. See **nomination guidelines** for details.

NARC Webinar! Partnering for Strong Economies: Regional Councils & Walkable Communities

May 5, 2:00 PM ET

Join NARC and America Walks for a webinar on how federal transportation funding is allocated through regional councils and how to access it for projects that promote walkable communities, including complete streets, safety efforts, and place-making. Attendees will explore two unique perspectives as we hear from a regional planner and an advocate who has worked to use the resources available from their regional council. Q&A to follow.

CONTACT US

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