



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF REGIONAL COUNCILS

eREGIONS



**Annual Conference Note!** If you still need to reserve a room or wish to cancel or alter your hotel reservation, please contact Marcy Fritter ([marcy@narc.org](mailto:marcy@narc.org)) before reaching out to the hotel. Thank you!

## NEWS FROM WASHINGTON

*Congress is in session.*

### **Major Local Organizations Issue Letter Evaluating Existing Regulations**

Today, the United States Conference of Mayors, National Association of Counties, National League of Cities, and NARC **sent a letter** to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) commenting on a range of issues, including waste- and storm-water mandates, the clean water rule, ambient air quality standards, and more. The letter underscored the need for EPA to respect unfunded mandates.

The organizations wrote:

*Unfunded mandates impose additional disproportionate responsibilities on local governments and our citizens, and increased financial liability, without regard to the fiscal impact of those policies. As such, their impact on the division of power within the intergovernmental partnership ultimately moves us further from our foundational principles of federalism.*

*Today, local governments are at a crossroads. Local governments, our residents, and businesses must spend additional resources to comply with numerous environment and non-environmental federal and state unfunded mandates, which further limits the money available for our locally-determined priorities. Furthermore, it is important to note that the capacity of local government to respond to federal demands is limited due to our own and our citizen's limited financial resources.*

### **Overview**

The firing of James Comey as FBI director has left Washington in a tumultuous state, making it nearly impossible to advance the numerous issues at hand. While there were reports of Senate discussions on how to move forward on healthcare and tax reform, there is no concrete evidence that progress has been made. In part, this is because senators want to know the Congressional Budget Office's cost estimate for the House healthcare bill, which is not expected until next week. Setting this aside, a recent CNN report suggests that the Senate's "Group of 13," tasked with drafting legislation by the Senate majority leader, have been unable to agree on much.

Last week, Senate leaders said they were inclined to let the House take the lead on tax reform. Despite having recently passed a fiscal year (FY) 2017 appropriations bill, efforts to develop a FY 2018 appropriations bill are on hold until the president releases his proposed budget on March 23.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the White House seemed incapable of moving forward with significant policy work as it was forced to respond to the Comey firing, day in and day out.

Can Congress move forward this week? That remains to be seen, but there are a number of activities on the schedule that suggest motion.

House Republicans are expected to pass, without any support from House Democrats, a bill that would repeal most of the Dodd-Frank law designed to tighten financial regulations following the economic meltdown of 2008.

Congress is poised to hold hearings on transportation, infrastructure, and water this week.

- Secretary of Transportation Elaine Chao is expected to testify before the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee on the administration's transportation and infrastructure priorities;
- The same committee's Transportation and Infrastructure (T&I) Subcommittee is expected to hold a hearing tomorrow on how to pay for the administration's infrastructure plans;
- The House Energy and Commerce Committee will hold a Friday hearing on funding drinking water systems and compliance with the *Clean Water Act*;
- On Thursday, the House Transportation and Infrastructure Water Resources and Environment Subcommittee plans to look at storm water and wastewater infrastructure; and
- The House T&I Committee, which is working on the next reauthorization of the Federal Aviation Administration, plans a Wednesday hearing on changing the air traffic control system, including privatization.

The Senate is also expected to move forward on the nomination of Jeffrey Rosen to be deputy secretary of Transportation and possibly approve his nomination before the end of the week.

We can expect some indications of the kind of FY 2018 budget the administration will release on May 23. Leaks are likely to tell us whether the administration will continue to seek significant cuts to domestic programs (like CDBG, transportation, and workforce) to offset increased funding for the military and the proposed border wall – something the administration was unable to get in the FY2017 appropriation.

The White House also announced that the chief counsel for the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee, Susan Bodine, has been nominated to lead EPA's enforcement arm.

And we shouldn't forget that last week, you and your regions had a significant victory when the president signed into law S.496, repealing the MPO Coordination Rule. While members of both parties came together to repeal this regulation, we are unlikely to see this kind of bipartisanship on other issues.

In an example of the nation's deep political divide: The *Washington Post* reported last week that a woman angry with Representative David Kustoff's (R-TN) support for the House-passed Obamacare repeal legislation tried to run the congressman's car off the road. The woman was arrested and released on bond, and will be arraigned today.

## OTHER NEWS

### **It's Infrastructure Week!**

Today in Washington, DC Water CEO and General Manager George Hawkins spoke at the Infrastructure Week Kickoff event at the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, along with U.S. Department of Transportation Secretary Elaine Chao, Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti, Denver Mayor Michael Hancock, CEOs, and labor leaders. This week-long education and advocacy event will highlight the state of our nation's infrastructure – roads, bridges, rail, ports, airports, water and sewer systems, the energy grid, and more – and encourage policymakers to invest in the projects, technologies, and policies necessary to make America competitive, prosperous, and safe. So why does America take part in an infrastructure week? Shouldn't the wealthiest nation on the planet have the best infrastructure in the world? Read more in Neil Bomberg's blog: **Why Do We Need Infrastructure Week?** See the *Events* section for details on NARC's Infrastructure Week event.

### **It's National Bike to Work Week!**

The National Household Travel Survey showed that the number of trips made by bicycle in the U.S. more than doubled from 1.7 billion in 2001 to 4 billion in 2009 – and that number continues to grow. National Bike Month includes an ever-expanding diversity of events in communities nationwide – but the biggest day of the month is Bike to Work Day, this Friday, May 19th. National Bike Month is a success because of the countless, diverse local events organized by dedicated bicyclists in their communities, organizations, and workplaces. Promote your local events with **resources** from the League of American Bicyclists. We love to see our members on bikes too - use **#RegionsLead** or **@NARCregions** this week and we'll share your efforts too!

### **New U.S. Community Preventive Services Task Force Recommendation**

The Community Preventive Services Task Force was established in 1996 by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to identify population health interventions that are scientifically proven to save lives, increase lifespans, and improve quality of life. The Task Force provides recommendations to help inform decision makers. Their newest recommendation is to increase physical activity through built environment approaches that combine transportation system interventions with land use and environmental design. The recommendation encourages improvements such as street connectivity and bike and pedestrian infrastructure to make physical activity more accessible.

## **REGIONS LEAD**

Visit [www.regionslead.org](http://www.regionslead.org) to read up on the latest NARC blogs. We invite members to submit blogs to the site too.

### **Why Do We Need Infrastructure Week?**

by Neil Bomberg

As we approach Infrastructure Week (May 15 through 19) – a week of education and advocacy designed to draw attention to the importance of infrastructure to our nation's economy, jobs, and communities – we should stop for a moment and ask why? Why must we have an Infrastructure Week? Shouldn't the wealthiest nation on the planet have the best infrastructure in the world? We should, but sadly, we don't.

### **At Long Last... A FY 2017 Omnibus Appropriations Bill**

by Neil Bomberg

After weeks of negotiations that at times seemed as if they would breakdown, the House and Senate early Monday morning reached an agreement on an appropriations bill that would increase military spending by \$15 billion, maintain non-defense discretionary funding, and increase border security funding by \$1.5 billion, but would prohibit any border security funds from being used to build the proposed border wall. The compromise bill seems more in keeping with Obama-era priorities than Trump-era priorities.

### **President's Tax Plan Leaves Out Infrastructure**

by Erich Zimmermann

As you have no doubt heard by now, the Trump administration released a tax reform "plan" that filled just one side of a single sheet of paper. Which is to say, the plan is light on details... Aside from the elimination of some tax deductions, the only other offset mentioned is a one-time tax on overseas earnings, or repatriation. This is notable if you care about infrastructure. Repatriation

funding has long been considered the primary way to pay for a significant infrastructure investment.

## FEATURED JOBS

*[View full list of jobs!](#)*

### **Director of Planning and Development**

East Alabama Regional Planning and Development Commission/Calhoun Area MPO,  
Anniston, AL

### **Engineer/Planner**

Southeast Michigan Council of Governments, Detroit, MI

### **Homeland Security Regional SAP**

Oakland County Michigan, Waterford, MI

### **Senior Planner**

Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission, Philadelphia, PA

## FUNDING

*[View full list of grants!](#)*

### **EDA NOFA: \$17 Million Available to Spur Regional Innovation**

Applications Due: June 23

**Informational Webinar:** May 22, 3:00 PM ET

The U.S. Department of Commerce's Economic Development Administration (EDA) today published the Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) for its 2017 Regional Innovations Strategies (RIS) program. The \$17 million being made available through the RIS NOFA will help to spur innovation capacity-building activities in regions across the nation. Under this competition, EDA is **seeking applications** for two separate funding opportunities: the i6 Challenge and the Seed Fund Support (SFS) Grant competition.

- **i6 Challenge (\$13M):** Across the country, regions and communities are helping entrepreneurs overcome challenging barriers to help build new companies and create jobs through the efforts of universities, National Labs, state and local governments, incubators, and various other organizations. The i6 Challenge helps drive these efforts by supporting the creation and expansion of programs that increase the rate at which innovations, ideas, intellectual property, and research are translated into products, services, viable companies, and, ultimately, jobs.
- **Seed Fund Support (SFS) Grant Competition (\$4M):** The availability of funding for early-stage companies is an essential element of a healthy innovation-based regional ecosystem. Taking an idea or innovation from conception to market often requires capital, but in many regions across the country, innovators and entrepreneurs struggle to find that capital. SFS grants provide funding for technical assistance and operational costs that support the planning, formation, launch, or scale of cluster-based seed funds that will invest their capital in innovation-based startups with a potential for high growth.

Funding for both programs is available to all communities regardless of level of distress.

## EVENTS

*[View full list of events!](#)*

### **Infrastructure Week 2017 - NARC and NLC Event**

May 19, 10:00 – 11:30 PM ET, Washington, DC

For years, autonomous vehicles, or self-driving cars, seemed like a fantasy unlikely to come to fruition. However, autonomous vehicles are here now and communities face the challenge of how to prepare for them and integrate them into mixed mobility environments. This panel discussion will feature several experts in this field and local government officials who will discuss the current landscape of autonomous vehicle research and technology development.

Learn what this means for communities and how they should prepare, including how autonomous vehicles are expected to work with existing mobility and transit systems.

### **Route Fifty Navigator Awards: Uncovering Innovation in Salt Lake City**

May 23, 8:15 - 10:15 AM MT

The *Route Fifty* Navigator Awards seek to identify and highlight individuals and teams of state and local innovators, technologists, leaders, and rising stars who have demonstrated their ability to conceive and implement great ideas. On May 23, *Route Fifty* will be in Salt Lake City to highlight the innovations driving Utah's state, county, and municipal governments. They'll talk with state and local officials about what makes these leaders, teams, and programs successful, as well as what lessons can be applied to governments across the country.

### **Updated Agenda! 51st Annual Conference & Exhibition**

June 4-7 - Monterey, CA

Join NARC and the California Association of Councils of Governments for NARC's 51st Annual Conference and Exhibition, which focuses on promoting effective regional cooperation and solutions through interaction and education.

## **CONTACT US**

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