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NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF REGIONAL COUNCILS

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eRegions

EXECUTIVE BRIEF

Dear Colleagues,

We continue to focus on our upcoming Annual Conference in Louisville. And I have great news to share on that front - NARC just confirmed U.S. DOT Secretary Anthony Foxx to keynote the Conference on Wednesday, June 11th at 8 AM!

I hope all of you can make it to this session. NARC members will have an opportunity to hear from the Secretary about the Department's priorities this year, including details on the Administration's reauthorization proposal, and more importantly, to ask questions of the nation's top transportation official.

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By creating a social media presence, NARC now connects with members, advocates, and government agencies on our regions' behalf in real-time and on an ongoing basis. Connect with NARC and our executive director on Twitter, @NARCregions and @JoannaNARC respectively. Check out our Facebook page [HERE](#).

PROGRAM UPDATE

Older Americans Month 2014: Kathy Greenlee, Assistant Secretary for Aging and Administrator of the Administration for Community Living, recently penned an article discussing the Older Americans Act for this year's Older Americans Month. She states that this May's focus is on injury prevention. The theme is "Safe Today. Healthy

See you in Louisville!
Joanna

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Tomorrow.” Click **HERE** to read her article and to learn more about the resources available to keep older Americans safe.

POLICYUPDATE

The Senate is recessed for a State Work Period throughout the week; The House reconvenes on Wednesday.

Administration Launches National Resource Network: Last week, the Obama Administration launched the *National Resource Network* (the Network). The three-year, \$10 million technical assistance program funded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) is a pilot program designed to serve as a “311 for cities.” Initially over 50 cities will have access to the pilot program with plans to expand it to hundreds of cities over the next year. HUD states that “the program will allow communities nationwide to connect to a network of private and public sector experts that will provide local governments with strategic help on key economic issues and aid the turnaround of local economies.” The Network website is where cities will be able to receive direct access to expert assistance. Click **HERE** for the press release, and **HERE** for the Network website.

USDA School Meal Flexibility: The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced this week that school districts working to meet updated whole grain requirements for school meals would gain some flexibility. This comes in response to feedback schools have been providing the USDA stating that “whole grain rich products currently on the market did not hold together when produced in large quantities for school cafeterias.” Schools that are having difficulty serving whole-grain rich pastas will be given a window of up to two more years to comply. Click **HERE** for additional information.

House and Senate Leaders Announce Deal to Improve American Workforce Development System: Last week, the *Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act* (WIOA) was introduced after months of negotiations in an attempt to improve the nation’s workforce development system. According to Senator Patty Murray’s press release, “the WIOA represents a compromise between the *SKILLS Act* (H.R. 803), which passed the U.S. House of Representatives in March of 2013 with bipartisan support, and the *Workforce Investment Act of 2013* (S. 1356), which passed through the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) Committee with a bipartisan vote of 18-3

in July of 2013." The bill will soon be considered by both the House and Senate. Click [HERE](#) for additional information including summary of improvements, statement of managers, and the text of the agreement.

House Committee Moves Transportation Funding Bill: The House Appropriations Committee last week approved the fiscal year (FY) 2015 funding bill for the Departments of Transportation (DOT) and HUD by a 28-21 vote. The bill makes available \$105.5 billion in discretionary budgetary resources, including \$53.5 billion in contract authority approved from the Highway Trust Fund (HTF). As previously discussed, the bill makes significant changes to the *Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery* (TIGER) program, reducing funding to \$100 million and preventing funding of mass transit, passenger rail, bike paths, and other transportation alternatives. An amendment offered by Rep. David Price (D-NC) would have restored funding to \$600 million (FY14 levels); Betty McCollum's (D-FL) amendment would have restored the eligibility of transit, rail, and other projects. Both were defeated.

President Continues to Pressure Congress on Transportation Funding: In his weekly address and during a series of recent trips, President Obama continued to warn that transportation funding will run out this summer if Congress fails to act. The President underscored the urgency by declaring that "nearly 700,000 jobs would be at risk over the next year" if the issue is not settled soon. During a visit to a local restaurant in Washington D.C., Vice President Biden stated that for the past 40 years transportation funding has been a bipartisan issue. Both the Administration and the Senate have released transportation reauthorization proposals; the House is expected to follow suit this summer.

REGIONS360

Florida RPCs - Increased Domestic Energy Usage Means Domestic Jobs: Florida's eleven Regional Planning Councils (RPCs) in association with the U.S. Economic Development Administration, U.S. Department of Energy (DOE), and the Florida DOE identified strategies to diversify Florida's energy future and reduce reliance on foreign energy sources. The results of the study culminated in the *Florida Energy Resiliency Report: Economic Analysis, Case Studies and Strategy Recommendation*. Click [HERE](#) for the complete report.

MORPC: Improving Air Quality in Central Ohio: The Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission (MORPC) recently launched an air quality campaign called “Take Five for Clean Air,” the aim of which is to protect public health and reduce air pollution by challenging individuals and organizations to choose five voluntary actions they can take to improve air quality in the region. The suggested actions include: signing up for air quality alerts and informing employees when they occur; implementing a no-idling vehicle policy; using alternative transportation with help from RideSolutions; providing reduced cost bus passes for employees; and inflating vehicle tires to the proper pressure. Click [HERE](#) for more information.

MEMBERREQUEST

SJCOG – Separate ADA Compliance Requirements for MPOs:

Caltrans, for the first time ever, is requiring an American with Disabilities Act (ADA) certification by way of the Exhibit 9-C, available by clicking [HERE](#). The San Joaquin Council of Governments (SJCOG) was recently asked to submit Exhibit 9-C to proceed with federal-aid projects. Specifically, does any other state DOT, as the cognizant agency, require separate and additional certification requirements for ADA compliance by the metropolitan planning organization? If so, what are they? Are they similar to the Exhibit 9-C as required by Caltrans?

MWCOG – Comprehensive Infrastructure Document:

The Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (MWCOG) is seeking information from its peers on the development of comprehensive infrastructure documents. MWCOG plans to create an all-encompassing document that includes infrastructure plans for roads and bridges, transit, water, energy, etc., and would like to see if any other regional planning organizations have done something similar. Specifically, has your COG or Agency developed a comprehensive document that details your entire portfolio of regional infrastructure?

Please forward any feedback to Anna Rosenbaum, anna@narc.org, including which member assistance request to which you are responding.

GRANT OPPORTUNITIES

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

GRANT: USDA – New Conservation Initiatives

Deadlines: June 6 and June 16

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack recently announced new programs that will “provide up to \$386 million to help farmers restore wetlands, protect working agriculture lands, support outdoor recreation activities and boost the economy.” These programs were created by the 2014 Farm Bill. The first of the new programs is the Agricultural Conservation Easements Program (ACEP) and applications must be submitted by the individual state deadline or June 6, 2014, whichever is earlier. The other program is the *Voluntary Public Access and Habitat Incentive Program* and applications must be submitted by June 16. Click [HERE](#) for additional information, and [HERE](#) to apply.

GRANT: DOL - Workforce Innovation Fund

Deadline: June 18

The U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) announced the availability \$53 million in grants through the Workforce Innovation Fund. The Workforce Innovation Fund is “an initiative designed to strengthen public job training programs by: delivering employment and training services more efficiently and effectively, facilitating greater cooperation across workforce programs and funding streams, scaling best practices, and implementing rigorous evaluation techniques.” Click [HERE](#) for additional information, and [HERE](#) to apply.

GRANT: USDA – \$78 Million Available for Local Food Enterprises

Deadline: June 20 – Click [HERE](#) for AMS Farmer’s Market and Local Foods Program.

Deadline: Rolling – Click [HERE](#) for Rural Development’s Business & Industry Guaranteed Loan Program.

USDA announced \$78 million in funding for local and regional food systems including: food hubs, farmers markets, aggregation and processing facilities, distribution services, and other local food business enterprises. \$30 million of this funding is available through competitive grants via the Agricultural Marketing Service’s *Farmers Market and Local Foods Promotion Program*.

GRANT: USDA – \$66 Million in Specialty Crop Block Grants Available

Application Deadline: July 9

As part of the Agricultural Act of 2014 (Farm Bill), \$66 million has been made available to state Departments of Agriculture for projects that help support specialty crop growers. Specialty crops are defined as fruits, vegetables, tree nuts, dried fruits, horticulture, and nursery crops (including floriculture). Almost all states are seeing an increase in funds. Click [HERE](#) for additional information and to apply.

UPCOMINGEVENTS

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

WEBINAR: Developing and Testing a National Geospatial System that Integrates Ecological Tools and Data Sets (Eco-Plan)

May 27, 2:00 PM ET

Transportation Research Board will summarize SHRP 2 Projects C40A and C40B: *SHRP 2 Developing and Testing a National Geospatial System that Integrates Ecological Tools and Data Sets (Eco-Plan)*. Project C40A produced a national-level integrated, geospatial ecological screening tool for early transportation planning to inform the environmental review process. With these advances, agreement on priority areas for preservation or conservation can be reached early in the process of planning new highway capacity. Data-based decisions can not only speed project delivery, but deliver projects that best balance community and environmental needs. Click [HERE](#) to register.

WEBINAR: U.S. DOT Mobility Services for All Americans (MSAA) Program

May 28, 2:00 PM ET

The main purpose of this is to inform stakeholders on U.S. DOT strategic directions and funding opportunities for MSAA deployments and address any questions or issues by potential Request for Proposals (RFP) respondents. This will discuss key MSAA priorities, such as system interoperability and common data format, and highlight important requirements outlined in the RFP. Click [HERE](#) for additional information and to register.

WEBINAR: Leveraging Archived Operations Data for Performance-Based Planning and Programming at the MPO Level

June 5, 2:00 PM ET

This session will describe analytical methodologies and procedures to

process archived operations data for planning and programming activities in a large metropolitan area. The role and importance of quality data processing to develop performance measures that support sound investment decisions will be examined. The session will include a description of the link between regional goals and objectives and a multimodal performance measurement framework, as well as lessons learned on selecting measures that can be communicated to multiple audiences. A case study will be shared describing the characteristics of each data source and the application of analytical tools used to develop a web-based Performance Dashboard tool. Attendance is limited to 100 connections and is first-come, first-served. Click [HERE](#) to log on to the webinar.

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. Click [HERE](#) to access the draft agenda, registration and hotel information. See you in Louisville!

CONFERENCE: AASHTO Summer Conference Target Setting Peer Exchange

Tuesday, June 17 - Phoenix, AZ

AASHTO will hold a Target Setting Peer Exchange during their summer conference in Phoenix. This peer exchange is funded through the support of the Federal Highway Administration and will cover topics related to collaboration between agencies in setting targets, coordination of performance targets, and integration of performance targets into key planning documents. They are specifically hoping to include representatives from MPOs. There is travel assistance available to help defray costs. If you are interested, please send an email to erich@narc.org.

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