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## NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF REGIONAL COUNCILS

VOL. XIV, No. 28, July 28, 2014

# eRegions

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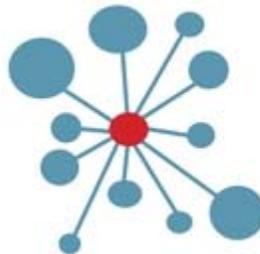
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## EXECUTIVE BRIEF

*From Shannon Baxevanis*

Dear Colleagues,

It is with a heavy heart that I depart NARC after a nearly seven and a half year journey of professional growth and personal fulfillment, experiencing the power and progress of regionalism. I cannot express my deep gratitude for the wealth of knowledge, hands-on practice, and skills development I received during my tenure at NARC. I will now bring these skills and experiences to my next opportunity with *National Grid*, a multinational electricity and gas utility company, where I will be managing their U.S. stakeholder relations for large and complex infrastructure projects.

**Anna Rosenbaum**

Communications

Associate

**Erich W. Zimmermann**

Director of Transportation

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NARC has many strengths that I know will flourish under Joanna's leadership, and the many challenges will receive equal attention and unique solutions as you collectively move to bolster the organization. Please do not hesitate to call me beyond my departure, be it for advice or ways we can continue to work together in my new position. I look forward to watching your continued success and hope that our paths continue to cross.

I have the utmost respect for the Board, members and staff, and wish you all the best. Thank you for your support, advice, and kindness over the years.

Thank you for everything!

Warm regards,

Shannon Baxevanis

Contact: **Shannon.Baxevanis@nationalgrid.com** or 202.306.5858  
(mobile)

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## **PROGRAMUPDATE**

**\$10B Private Investment Fund for Jobs in Rural America:** The White House Rural Council last week announced a new effort to help finance job-creating infrastructure projects in rural America. The White House Rural Council created the U.S. Rural Infrastructure Opportunity Fund through which private entities can invest in infrastructure projects across the country. The initial \$10 billion investment comes from CoBank, a national cooperative bank serving rural America and a member of the Farm Credit System. The fund will be used to invest in hospitals, schools and other educational facilities, rural water and wastewater systems, energy projects, broadband expansion, local and regional food systems, and other rural infrastructure. U.S. Department of Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack stated that "this fund represents a new approach to our support for job-creating projects across the country," and that "with new efforts like this we can move beyond existing programs and help encourage substantial private investment in projects that grow the economy and improve quality of life for millions of Americans." Click **HERE** for additional information.

**HHS Offers New Materials to Facilitate Conversations about Brain Health:** The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)

now offers a new set of evidence-based materials to facilitate conversations with older people about brain health. The *Brain Health Resource* is a four-part set of materials designed for use in senior centers and other community settings. It provides connections to health screenings, exercise programs, chronic disease self-management education, fall prevention programs, and behavioral health programs funded by HHS. Helping older adults grow older in both good physical and mental health should alleviate some costs associated with the nation's health care budget. Click [HERE](#) for the materials.

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## POLICYUPDATE

*Congress is in session.*

**Congressional Activity Advances for Short-Term HTF Fix:** This week, the U.S. Senate will begin debate on H.R. 5021, which provides a funding patch for the Highway Trust Fund (HTF). H.R. 5021 was passed by the U.S. House of Representatives on July 16, and would provide an additional \$11 billion to keep the HTF solvent until May 31, 2015. Without a patch, U.S. Department of Transportation has indicated that it would be forced to reduce and delay reimbursements for projects beginning August 1.

Under the Senate agreement, there will be two hours of general debate, in addition to consideration of four amendments with an hour of debate each. The amendments – which will require 60 votes to pass – include a devolution proposal and a change that would force action during the "lame duck" session of Congress after the election. If none of the amendments are accepted and the underlying bill passes – which will require just a simple majority vote – it will be ready for the President's signature. Any change to the bill will send it back to the House.

The bill is expected to pass, but previous bipartisan support for proposals that would reduce funding and duration of the bill indicate that an amendment is possible. With only a few days remaining until insolvency, this would require quick agreement between the chambers and new votes in each.

**Vice President on *Rebuild America*:** As Congress considers a \$10.9 billion funding patch for the HTF, Vice President Joe Biden made the case for a long-term extension of federal transportation funding on Wednesday. In a five minute video posted on the White House website,

Biden used the White House's "white board" to discuss the history and importance of the nation's highways and the funding that made them possible. He stated that while it's good that Congress is most likely going to prevent the HTF from becoming insolvent with a short-term fix, a long-term solution is absolutely necessary and is the best way forward for our nation's infrastructure and for the people, communities, and businesses connected to it. This video comes as both the President and the Secretary of Transportation have been publicly urging Congress to pass a long-term bill right away. Click [HERE](#) to watch the video.

**Senate Confirms Two Transportation Nominees:** Last week, the U.S. Senate confirmed the nominations of Victor Mendez as Deputy Secretary of Transportation and Peter Rogoff as Under Secretary of Transportation for Policy, both by voice vote.

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## REGIONS360

**Classic Towns of Greater Philadelphia:** The Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC), representing the Philadelphia metropolitan area, has created an initiative called *Classic Towns* to revitalize suburban "classic" town centers as vibrant residential areas with diverse architecture, bustling businesses, entertainment districts, and recreational opportunities. Click [HERE](#) to learn more about the initiative, [HERE](#) for DVRPC's publication *Revitalizing Suburban Downtown Retail Districts: Strategies and Best Practices*, and [HERE](#) for DVRPC's *Smart Transportation Guidebook: Planning and Designing Highways and Streets that Support Sustainable and Livable Communities*.

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## MEMBERREQUESTS

**Evaluating the Benefits of Transportation Investments:** The Wasatch Front Regional Council (WFRC) in Salt Lake City, Utah is working with local partner agencies to evaluate the benefits of local transportation projects. Specifically, WFRC is looking for studies or methodologies used in other regions -- including economic, financial, engineering analyses, and/ or communications materials -- that have evaluated the benefits associated with the development of transportation projects. The studies and other materials can broadly consider new/ improved facilities or maintenance/ preservation/ operations for roads, trails, etc. The benefits include not only traditional transportation metrics such as travel time or infrastructure condition, but

also economic development, air quality, and quality of life.

Please forward examples to Anna Rosenbaum, [anna@narc.org](mailto:anna@narc.org).

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## GRANT OPPORTUNITIES

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

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## UPCOMING EVENTS

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

### **Reminder! NARC WEBINAR: Monthly Reauthorization Discussion**

*July 30, 1:00 – 2:00 PM ET*

With the current transportation authorization - MAP-21 - set to expire at the end of September, there is a lot happening on the Hill to prepare for the next authorization bill. NARC has been meeting with transportation staff in the House, Senate, and the Administration. Come with ideas and questions; there will be time at the end for an open, virtual discussion. Space is limited. Click [HERE](#) to reserve your spot.

### **WORKSHOP: Solar Powering our Community**

*August 1; Roanoke, VA*

Hosted by NARC and the Roanoke Valley-Alleghany Regional Commission, this free [SolarOPs](#) workshop will focus on helping communities learn more about regional solar energy development and implementation. There will also be a free tour of the VA Medical Center's solar array following the workshop. Space for this event is limited, so please register [HERE](#) today.

### **Updated with Registration Link! NARC WEBINAR: FHWA/FTA Planning Rule**

*August 6, 3:00 PM ET*

Join this National Association of Regional Councils (NARC) webinar to discuss the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)/ Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Metropolitan and Statewide and Nonmetropolitan Planning Rules. Comments on the proposed rule are due in early September, so we need to hear from you! We want to gather our members concerns, positive feedback, and general questions/comments on the rule. This information will inform NARC's comments, and we hope that our members will include information that

they learn in their own comments. Click [HERE](#) to register.

**NARC CONFERENCE: Executive Directors' Conference**

*September 21 - 24; Des Moines, IA*

Join the Des Moines Area Metropolitan Planning Organization and NARC for the 2014 Executive Directors' Conference in Des Moines, IA.

Click [HERE](#) to register today!

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