



LEADERSHIP NOTE

Wicker-Booker STP Amendment: NARC Asked, You Responded

Dear NARC Members,

We wanted to update you on the final result of the Senate transportation debate. As we explained last week, the Senate's reauthorization proposal – the *DRIVE Act* – needs significant improvement to ensure that local governments have the resources necessary to maintain and improve their transportation systems.

The *DRIVE Act* includes much of what NARC and its coalition partners requested, including 100% suballocation of the Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP), funding for bridges not on the National Highway System, and a fix to the MAP-21 requirement regarding transit representation on MPO boards. On the other hand, the bill fails to reduce overall funding for local areas in the Surface Transportation Program (STP).

NARC and its coalition members partnered with Senators Wicker (R-MS) and Booker (D-NJ), who drafted and introduced an amendment that would increase overall STP funding and provide a greater share of that funding to local areas, in addition to increasing access to funding for areas with less than 200,000 population. It was a great amendment that would have made the *DRIVE Act* a bill NARC could enthusiastically support.

When we turned to our members – YOU! – we were thrilled with the response. Many of you reached out to your Senators to explain the importance of STP funds for your communities. And with your help, the list of co-sponsors expanded dramatically to include Senators Peters (D-MI), Stabenow (D-MI), Casey (D-PA), and Durbin (D-IL)! Supporters of the amendment now also include Senators Shaheen (D-NH), King (I-ME), Blunt (R-MO), and Kirk (R-IL). This is an impressive list, and all were directly contacted by NARC members.

Unfortunately, in the end, Senate procedure worked against our efforts. A number of non-germane amendments about social issues, which had nothing to do with transportation, threatened to derail final passage of the bill. As a result, Majority Leader McConnell (R-KY) used a procedure called “filling the amendment tree” that prevents additional amendments from being introduced from the Senate floor. So while the bill passed with 65 votes in favor, the STP amendment never received a vote, and the STP program is a long way from where we want it.

This outcome on STP is a disappointment. But the road to reauthorization is a long one. Based on our meetings on Capitol Hill, NARC believes that the House is a better avenue for an increase in STP funding, and with the strong support we have started building in the Senate, we believe there is still an excellent opportunity to fix this glaring problem with the *DRIVE Act*.

With your continued support of these efforts, NARC will continue to press for increased funding to local governments. We thank all of you for your work throughout this process and for your commitment to the passage of a reauthorization bill that will improve transportation mobility options for your communities. Stay tuned as we will continue to provide updates – and make requests of you!

Thanks,
Erich W. Zimmermann

NEWS FROM WASHINGTON

Senate is in session. House is on August recess.

Cyber Security on Senate Agenda

The House left for August recess and the Senate will meet briefly to work on a legislation to overhaul the nation's cybersecurity laws that would coordinate private sector and government actions against online intruders. Debate will be contentious with opponents pointing to a lack of privacy protections in the bill and raising concerns over timing debate on the eve of the Senate's August recess. The **Cyber Information-Sharing Act** is similar to House information sharing bills passed earlier this year.

White House Unveils Power Plant Rule

President Obama today released new rules to limit carbon pollution from power plants. The Clean Power Plan would cut carbon emissions 32 percent below 2005 levels by 2030 and encourage the use of cleaner alternatives. Opponents warn the rules could reduce jobs in coal-producing areas, drive up power bills, and destabilize the electric grid. More information on the topic [HERE](#).

FEMA Seeks Feedback on Federal Interagency Operational Plans During National Engagement Period

Feedback Due: September 2 at 5:00 PM ET

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) is requesting stakeholder feedback on working drafts of four of the five *Federal Interagency Operational Plans* (FIOPs): Protection, Mitigation, Response, and Recovery. The FIOPs describe how the federal government aligns resources and delivers core capabilities. Each FIOP outlines the concept of operations for integrating and synchronizing existing national-level Federal capabilities to support the whole community. This update of the FIOPs focuses on discrete, critical content revisions, and confirming edits as a result of comments received on the National Preparedness Goal and National Planning Frameworks. Use the provided feedback submission form found [HERE](#). Please provide any comments and recommendations, using the submission form, to PPD8-Engagement@fema.dhs.gov.

OTHER NEWS

NLC Report: Local Economic Conditions for 2015

The National League of Cities (NLC) released a report, **Local Economic Conditions 2015**, which finds unequal recovery with slow productivity growth, suppressed wages, and stubborn unemployment. NLC's analysis is based on a survey of local officials. Overall, cities have seen marked improvement in their economic well-being from a couple of years ago. Forty percent of mid-sized cities with a population of 100,000 to 299,999 reported that local economic conditions had greatly improved during the past year, compared with just 20% of cities with fewer than 50,000 residents. No big cities with populations over 300,000 reported that economic conditions had worsened over the last year and 23% said they had improved greatly. Meanwhile, 5% of cities with populations under 50,000 said that they had worsened slightly or greatly. Read the [Wall Street Journal analysis](#) of the NLC findings regarding the economic health of cities across the country.

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

Miami-Dade MPO Considers Tunnel Idea

Brickell Avenue, which crosses over the Miami River, has been a site for heavy traffic congestion.

For years, commuters have experienced chronic congestion here while the drawbridge opens to let ships pass through. This has led to the proposal of building a tunnel under the river and into downtown Miami. Proposals for a tunnel have come up many times in the past, but have always been rejected for financial reasons. A resolution has been submitted by a member of Miami-Dade's MPO to explore the possibility of a study that will determine the feasibility of a tunnel. While some worry about the costs of the study, others have voiced alternatives to a tunnel such as reversible lanes and dedicated lanes for emergency vehicles and school buses to help ease traffic.

FEATURED JOBS

[View full list of jobs!](#)

Principal Planner – Local Technical Assistance Program

Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, Chicago, IL

Senior Planner – Local Technical Assistance Program

Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, Chicago, IL

Executive Director

Western Upper Peninsula Planning and Development Region, Houghton, MI

Alamo Aging Office Assistant P-T

Alamo Area Council of Governments, San Antonio, TX

FUNDING

[View full list of grants!](#)

EVENTS

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NARC Conference! Becoming Your Best: Professional Development Training for Executive Directors

August 9-11, Austin, TX

Join the National Association of Regional Councils (NARC) and the National Association of Development Organizations (NADO) for the 2015 Professional Development Training for Executive Directors conference in Austin, TX. At the first ever Professional Development Training for Executive Directors conference put on by NARC and NADO, you will have the opportunity to network, share best practices, and explore opportunities for strengthening professional capacity and development. You won't want to miss it!

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