



## EXECUTIVE BRIEF

Dear Colleagues,

We are cautiously optimistic here in Washington, D.C. as the U.S. House of Representatives and U.S. Senate negotiators seemed to reach an agreement last night on a \$1.1 trillion spending bill to keep the Federal Government open through next September. The bill will likely be filed this evening, with action expected before current funding runs out Thursday night. Negotiators are mum on the details at this stage, although no one expects to see any increases in domestic program spending as a result of this bill. Once the legislation passes, both chambers are expected to break until the next Congress convenes in January.

In February, NARC will hold its annual National Conference of Regions, an opportunity for us to discuss policy and legislative issues with a variety of experts. I am excited to report that we have just confirmed **Bruce Katz**, Vice President and Director of Metropolitan Policy Program Brookings Institution, as the opening session speaker. Building America's Future Co-Chair (and former U.S. DOT Secretary) **Ray LaHood** will follow with a plenary session on the future of transportation. We are also working on a variety of other exciting sessions; Click [HERE](#) to see a draft agenda of the Conference. We hope to see you there!

Thanks,  
Joanna Turner

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## PROGRAM UPDATE

**Help Shape the Future of USFS Funding:** The U.S. Forest Service (USFS) released their *Ten Year Urban Forestry Action Plan* for comment. USFS uses this plan to develop grant categories for the [Forest Service's National Urban Forestry Grant Program](#). USFS would like NARC members to rank and comment on the plan's draft 14 key issues, which will help shape the direction of the plan for the urban forestry community of program, grant categories, activities, and guidance for their Urban and Community Forestry Assistance Program. Click [HERE](#) to help shape the next decade of urban and community forestry. Comments close December 19.

**Local Foods, Local Places Communities Selected:** The White House Rural Council and six federal agencies have selected 26 communities to participate in [Local Foods, Local Places](#), a federal initiative providing direct technical support and expertise to community partners integrating local food systems into regional economic action plans.

These efforts will make a significant impact in the communities participating in the Local Foods, Local Places initiative. The Local Foods, Local Places efforts are as varied as the communities themselves. For instance, Wheeling, West Virginia is planning on revitalizing a historic and underused ceremonial vineyard into a productive public asset showcasing local products. Unity, Maine will receive technical assistance to create a more connected, walkable community; better market the community's agricultural character; and create a local food system for the town and surrounding region. Click [HERE](#) for the announcement.

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## POLICYUPDATE

*Senate is in session today; House will resume tomorrow.*

**House Passes Fuel Tax Increase!** Yes, you read that correctly. It just wasn't *that* fuel tax, and the money won't be going into the Highway Trust Fund (HTF). As part of the pay-for package, the *Achieving a Better Life Experience Act* (ABLE; H.R. 647) would increase the diesel fuel tax that barge operators currently pay by 45 percent, from 20 to 29 cents. This makes for an odd offset, given that the funds will be put into the Inland Waterway Trust Fund and spent on dam, lock, and dredging projects on lakes and rivers. The ABLE bill is expected to be coupled with the tax extenders bill and sent to the Senate, so there is a good chance this provision becomes law.

**TRIA Deal Nears Completion:** House and Senate negotiators are working on a deal to extend the *Terrorism Risk Insurance Act* (TRIA), before the current authorization expires on December 31. House Financial Services Chairman Jeb Hensarling (R-TX), Senator Chuck Schumer (D-NY), and House Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy (R-CA) are negotiating a package that will extend TRIA for six years and roughly double the loss threshold for Federal Government involvement from its current \$100 million level. Negotiations are still underway to determine whether to offset the legislation in this fiscal year in order to comply with House budget rules. The legislation, once finalized, will likely be attached to the omnibus spending bill.

**House Passes One-Year Tax Extenders Legislation:** Last week, the House passed a one year extension of expired tax breaks in a 378-46 vote. The package would retroactively renew more than 50 expired corporate and individual tax breaks, totaling a cost of \$41.6 billion over ten years. The state and local sales tax deduction is included in the package. The Senate is almost certain to pass this version of the bill, as Finance Chairman Ron Wyden (D-OR) has dropped his attempt to pass a two year tax break extension.

**Congressional Budget Action on DHS could impact State and Local Budgets:** According to CQ Roll Call, Congress' plan to fund all federal programs except the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to protest the President's action on immigration would prevent the DHS from distributing grant money without a regular spending bill. Emergency managers would have to pay costs up front and be reimbursed when Congress adopts a DHS spending bill. An earlier spending agreement in Congress specified \$1.5 billion in local emergency management grant programs for fiscal year 2015.

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## REGIONS360

**SPC CommuteInfo Program:** The Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission (SPC) sponsors coordinated a multi-regional commuter vanpool and ridesharing program in cooperation with transportation management associations in the Pittsburgh metro area and its neighboring MPO, Brooke-Hancock-Jefferson MPO (BHJ-MPC) in Ohio and West Virginia. Staffed by SPC, "[CommutelInfo.org](http://CommutelInfo.org)" delivers multimodal information to commuters, sponsors vanpools, and

encourages shared rides for commuters in its own 7200 square mile area and even across state boundaries in a seamless program. In addition to its own vanpools, the CommuteInfo program encourages use of public transit, and bike-pooling by distributing route maps and other information produced by the MPO GIS system and from local advocacy groups demonstrating best routes and cost savings for participants. The CommuteInfo program works with regional corporations and colleges to reduce demand for costly parking on premises by holding informational briefings with their Human Resources departments about tax advantages for transportation benefits and assisting in vanpool formation.

**MWCOG and MARC recognized as Climate Action Champions for Leadership on Climate Change:** The White House announced last week the U.S. Department of Energy's selection of 16 national Climate Action Champions, recognizing local and regional efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and enhance climate resilience. The 16 designated Climate Action Champions represent a diverse group of communities working on climate issues.

- Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (MWCOG) developed the *National Capital Region Climate Change Report*, demonstrating a fully integrated approach to climate change mitigation and outlining goals in the areas of greenhouse gas emissions, renewable energy, transportation and land use, sustainability and resilience, and infrastructure.
- Mid-American Regional Council (MARC) promotes regional cooperation and innovative solutions, and seeks to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 2 percent per year.

Click [HERE](#) for the press release.

**MARC's Solar Map in the Spotlight:** As part of [Solar Ready II](#), through the U.S. Department of Energy Rooftop Solar Challenge II, MARC in Kansas City, MO launched an official [solar map](#) of their region. The map, which allows residents to view their property's solar potential by submitting their address, is a substantial asset in addressing consumer skepticism surrounding solar projects. Interest in solar in the Kansas City region is expected to grow in response to MARC's solar map. Click [HERE](#) to learn more about the map and how it is helping grow the solar market in MARC's region.

**NVRC's Solarize Campaign:** The Northern Virginia Regional Commission (NVRC) launched a regional solarize campaign, [Solarize NoVA](#). The program exceeded their goals and they anticipate interest to continue to grow. Click [HERE](#) to learn more about this innovative approach to cooperative procurement of solar.

**New Orleans Appoints First Chief Resilience Officer:** New Orleans Mayor Mitch Landrieu appointed the city's first chief resilience officer as part of a global effort called 100 Resilient Cities, an initiative that helps communities prepare for social and economic stresses that threaten urban areas. New Orleans Redevelopment Authority Executive Director Jeff Hebert will serve in this new capacity. Hebert will be tasked with developing a "roadmap to resilience" by bringing together a coalition of people throughout all levels of government and segments of the city. Click [HERE](#) for more information.

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## MEMBERREQUESTS

Please send all responses to Anna Rosenbaum, [anna@narc.org](mailto:anna@narc.org).

**MPO Salary Survey:** Tippecanoe County Area Planning Commission in Indiana requests the following salary information (numbers or ranges are fine) for the following positions:

- MPO Director
- MPO Deputy Director
- GIS Specialist
- Entry-level Planning Staff

Please include the total population that your organizations serves in your response, and send this information by December 12.

**Communications Strategies:** Does your COG have a written communications strategy that you can share? The Southeast Michigan Council of Governments (SEMCOG) in Detroit is interested in expanding their communications program and would like to see how other COGs have identified their communications goals, and their strategies to implement those goals.

**Use of HUD's Location Affordability Portal:** Does your COG or MPO regularly use the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) [Location Affordability Portal](#) for scenario or other planning purposes? If so, please let us know how and when you use the tool. HUD is interested in this information.

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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: Introduction to the National Center for Mobility Management**

*December 11, 2:00 – 3:00 PM ET*

NARC will join the National League of Cities and the American Public Transportation Association to co-host a webinar on the work of the National Center for Mobility Management (NCMM). NCMM promotes customer-centered mobility strategies to advance good health, economic vitality, self-sufficiency, and community. This webinar will provide an overview of the NCMM's capacity-building resources available to communities and share tips on how to tap into the Center's expertise on transportation coordination, health care and job access strategies, funding and financing, and more. Click [HERE](#) to register.

**WEBINAR: Behind the Scenes Briefing on the 2015 SelectUSA Investment Summit for Economic Development Organizations**

*December 12, 10:00 AM ET*

Do you represent a U.S. economic development organization (EDO)? Are you curious about how the 2015 SelectUSA Investment Summit can contribute to your efforts to attract job-creating investment? This webinar, featuring U.S. Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Economic Development Jay Williams, will highlight opportunities available for state, regional, and local EDOs at the Summit, including the expanded trade show and new pre-Summit SelectUSA Academy on March 22. Click [HERE](#) to RSVP.

**NARC CONFERENCE: NARC's 2015 National Conference of Regions**

*February 8-10, 2015 – Washington, DC*

Registration is open for the National Conference of Regions. This conference is a forum for locally-elected officials and their Regional Councils to explore federal policy issues, and discuss NARC's legislative priorities for the 114th Congress. Click [HERE](#) for the conference webpage.