



#### ISSUE

**The National Association of Regional Councils (NARC)** supports the existence and continued operations of Councils of Government (COGs) and Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) of all sizes – large, small, urban and rural – in transportation planning and programming to promote regional solutions to national transportation needs that support economic growth, environmental sustainability, and enhanced mobility.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

**STRONG FEDERAL ROLE** – **The Federal government must continue to play a strong and focused role in shaping the future of our nation’s surface transportation policy.** The federal government should lead in furthering America’s competitive advantage by developing projects of regional and national significance which reduce congestion, improve the environment, enhance goods movement and create and maintaining jobs.

**STRONG LOCAL ELECTED OFFICIAL ROLE** – Our nation is best served when the needs and considerations of local communities are maximized across all government policy. **The absolute inclusion and leadership of local elected officials, building on their understanding of local needs, opportunities, and obligations, as well as their “on-the-ground” perspective, should be the forefront of transportation over the next 50 years.**

**REGIONAL COUNCIL ROLE** – Regional planning is essential to the construction of infrastructure to move people, goods and services across our surface transportation network, continually bolstering our economy. Since the late 1960s, Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) have, directed the construction and maintenance of transportation infrastructure in urban areas with 50,000 or greater population. MPOs and Councils of Government (COGs) perform comprehensive planning with substantial public input and have a strong interest in maintaining a safe and efficient multi-modal transportation system to support regional initiatives.

**REGIONAL AUTHORITY & RESOURCES** – The success of regional planning and cooperation is contingent upon proper authority for local elected officials and adequate resources to build capacity and address the following key issues: integration of urban, suburban and rural interests; efficient goods movement; transportation safety planning; environmental mitigation; governance that is accountable to its citizenry; and, the future financing of our transportation system. NARC advocates examining collapsing current funding streams into a mechanism that fully funds and establishes regions and their local governments as primary recipients of current and future federal resources. In areas where regional organizations do not currently exist, a mechanism for their establishment should be created to meet the needs of contiguous local jurisdictions. **Policies must prioritize the economic and cultural linkages between regions – regardless of size – and support transportation planning to maximize the authority, funding and future of regions.**

**COOPERATION** – The cooperation between and integration of rural, suburban and urban regions will bolster the American economy. All policies must prioritize the linkages between regions, regardless of size, and support transportation planning to maximize the authority and funding for regions. **All regional organizations should receive the necessary authority to be responsible for all federally directed funding, decision making, and performance standards that create a truly intermodal and multi-modal system.** Conversely, the importance of state systems should not be undervalued, but rather, a more equitable split system of state and regional funding and authority, encouraging cooperative relationships, should be established.

**SAFETY & SECURITY** – **Safety and security are paramount in establishing and maintaining an efficient multi-modal transportation network with COGs and MPOs serving as a primary leader in transportation safety planning activities.** Policy and program changes are necessary to reduce the inconsistencies surrounding COG/MPO participation in safety and security planning, better incorporating regional transportation interests into state safety planning programs, including those that address critical infrastructure and disaster planning.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

**FINANCING** – The future of our country’s transportation system is in question. With an insolvent Highway Trust Fund and without other funds to support a national multi-modal transportation system, our country will be unable to compete in a global marketplace, sustain jobs and strengthen the overall national economy. Innovative transportation financing mechanisms which empower COGs and MPOs, capitalizing on their vast experience, must be explored to meet regional and national needs. **NARC advocates for an increase in the federal gas tax, while concurrently transitioning to revenue sources that are predictable, diversified and diffuse.** COGs and MPOs should be able to exercise and be direct recipients of finance mechanisms that bolster capabilities to execute regionally approved transportation plans. These mechanisms include, but are not limited to:

- Additional taxing at all levels of government;
- Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) and other user-based fees;
- Public Private Partnerships (PPPs) that do not undermine public authority in managing infrastructure;
- National Infrastructure Bank through which the Federal government can finance infrastructure projects of substantial regional or national significance with public and private capital;
- Regional Infrastructure Improvement Zones (RIIZs); and,
- New revenue sources like those generated from a possible cap-and-trade program or another approach used to control pollution by providing economic incentives for achieving reductions in the emissions of pollutants.

**FREIGHT** – Goods movement is the backbone of America’s commerce and requires a high degree of coordination, connectivity and easy access between multiple modes of transportation – highways, ports, railroads and airlines. COGs and MPOs are well positioned to coordinate the freight interests within the regional context of transportation, economic development and environmental planning. **NARC advocates that the Administration work with regional organizations to establish proactive transportation policies that address efficient and cost effective freight movement, improving regional, state and local economies. NARC recommends implementing a dedicated, firewalled freight funding source in our national surface transportation program to meet current and future freight needs.**

**SIMPLICITY** – As we enter an era of planning overwhelmed with funding and sustainability challenges, we must create and foster an environment that realizes the benefits of all transportation mode options – transit, rail, and aviation – as a solution to many of the problems plaguing urban, suburban and rural areas. The disparity between the Highway and Mass Transit Accounts encourages a perception that multimodalism is not an important part of our national transportation network. Balanced funding and opportunities between all modes should be established. **NARC urges the adoption of a “Transportation Account” that collapses all surface transportation related funding into one funding stream – directed to the states, regions and localities – to develop the best and most flexible transportation solutions possible. NARC urges the Administration to collapse redundant and duplicative programs within the U.S. Department of Transportation and other transportation related programs across all federal agencies.** In doing so, states and localities can enjoy more flexibility, authority and funding, while accepting more responsibility and accountability for the projects and programs in their regions.

**DATA & TECHNOLOGY** – Transportation planning and decision-making rely on the most up-to-date data available to create models that forecast future transportation and land-use needs. Policy and program changes are needed at all levels of government to improve data collection and promulgation, and the technologies available to aid in regional planning for emerging transportation, land-use and environmental issues. **The federal government should continue to be a leader and play an active role in data collection, innovation, and research, particularly as it relates to the needs of local governments and their regional organizations.**

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