

ISSUE BRIEF: Rural and Urban Cooperation

Improving Regionalism at All Levels

The cooperation between and integration of rural and urban regions is integral to expanding the American economy and maintaining standards of living. The **National Association of Regional Councils (NARC)** advocates for policies that connect the linkages between all regions, regardless of size, and supports regional coordination in the advancement of transportation, economic development, homeland security and environmental issues that maximize the authority, funding and positive future rule for urban and rural regions.

The country's **rural transportation** network is a major component of a larger, multimodal system that is critical to the transporting of people, goods and services. A safe and efficient system is characterized by the connectivity of all modes across all regions of our country – large and small, urban and rural. Investments for improvements need to be strategically targeted across the system and decision-making for maintenance, preservation and new capacity should be done in conjunction with local elected officials. Empowering local elected officials will strengthen rural capacity and further facilitate the integration of our transportation system. This connectivity, which is vital to meeting demands for sustained commerce, seamless goods movement, and energy efficiency and independence, will be a central debate in the upcoming surface transportation reauthorization bill. Rural transportation advocates need to be a strong voice at the national table.

Tied directly to the transportation system is economic development, the cornerstone to vibrant, growing communities. Over the years, rural regions throughout the United States have adapted to remain competitive in the national and global economy. The economic growth or decline of rural regions greatly impacts the nation as a whole and, therefore, it is necessary to ensure **rural economic development** continues. This includes increased investment through the Farm Bill to ensure rural development, particularly in relationship to the biofuel industry; rural housing capacity built at the state and local levels to accommodate jobs creation; and, fully funding federal regional commissions, which interplay closely with Local Development Districts (LDDs), who prioritize, plan and execute critical economic development programs.

Keeping the homeland secure is a responsibility of all regional leadership - rural and urban alike. It is imperative they work together to plan, prepare and execute strategies that will protect the safety and security of the nation's communities. Regional cooperation in **homeland security** matters is essential – many rural regions contain several of the nation's major dams, power plants, chemical plants and weapon stockpiles, and serve as evacuation locations for larger metropolitan areas. Rural areas need additional information, funding and resources for planning emergency preparedness, implementation, management and recovery assistance.

Regional Councils across the nation are putting exciting and innovative programs and tools in place to help their local governments address common **environmental issues**. Rural communities are committed to helping promote and utilize regional environmental programs that protect lands from harmful environmental practices and impacts. Issues like rural residential development raise implications for farmland prices and the availability of land for agriculture and forestry, which can affect rural amenities and the rural environment. Therefore, environmental analysis and mitigation on the part of state and local officials is necessary to best plan, channel and control growth while preserving natural resources, which, in these regions, remain key sources of jobs, income and general livelihood and heritage for agrarians.

NARC is working to ensure the nation's regions, regardless of population, demographics, classification or size, are represented on the federal level and improved by way of increased funding, authority and opportunities to connect and empower regions.

NARC has over forty years of experience serving as the national voice for regionalism by advocating for regional cooperation as the most effective way to address a variety of community planning and development opportunities and issues - large and small, urban and rural – through advocacy, education, trainings, workshops and conferences. NARC offers its assistance and the substantive expertise of its staff and members to Congressional Members, staff, the Administration and federal agencies on all issues within transportation, community and economic development, homeland security and environment, or those impacting at the local and regional government levels. *Please feel free to contact Shannon Menard at Shannon@narc.org or 202.986.1032, x.217 for more information.*



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