

CONGRESS BRIEF

Congress has been active the past few weeks on a number of issues important to NARC members. This includes continued work leading to the finalization of a conference report for the 2008 Farm Bill (current law extended though May 16th), which will likely receive a [presidential veto](#); a hearing on [FEMA disaster mitigation grants](#) (Click [HERE](#) for NARC's submitted testimony); a contentious debate on the FAA reauthorization bill, which looks like it will not pass Republican muster; and, [housing legislation](#) to reduce foreclosures.

Important hearings from this week:

“Efficiency and Climate Policy Hearing: Doing More With Less” - [more info](#)

“Aviation and the Environment: Emissions” - [more info](#)

“Improving the Capacity of Climate Modeling for Decisionmakers and End-Users” - [more info](#)

“Goods Movement & Our Nation's Highways” - [more info](#)

“The Resilient Homeland - Broadening the Homeland Security Strategy” - [more info](#)

“Assessing the Resiliency of the Nation's Supply Chain” - [more info](#)

“Financing Infrastructure Investment” - [more info](#)

Last week NARC had several discussions related to the reauthorization of the Economic Development Administration

TRANSPORTATION

DEVELOPMENT

HOMELAND SECURITY

ENVIRONMENT

NARC 2008 policy positions have been released and can be accessed on the appropriate issue area webpage. Please visit the click on the following issue to review NARC policies.

[Transportation](#)

[Economic & Community Development](#)

[Homeland Security](#)

[Environment](#)

Please contact [Shannon Menard](#) for policy information. **Send NARC any pertinent case studies on the policy issue areas from your RC, COG or MPO.**

TRANSPORTATION BRIEF

FAA Reauthorization Bill Hits Turbulence

Senators rejected a cloture motion on the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Reauthorization bill ([HR 2881](#)), possibly killing progress on the bill for this year. This is due to a lack of agreement on disputed provisions. Congress will soon be forced to extend the current FAA authorization ([PL 110-190](#)) which expires at the end of June, maintaining current authorization levels. One of the main sticking points in the bill is a group of provisions not related to aviation, including a temporary fix to the Highway Trust Fund (HTF). Opposition is also directed at rail infrastructure tax bonds and the doubling of an oil spill tax, from 5 cents to 10 cents a barrel, which would raise \$3.5 billion. Last Friday, Republicans introduced their own version S 2972, removing all non-aviation-related tax items.

Senate Finance Chairman Baucus (D-MT) issued a [statement](#) condemning the Republican bill “that would gut \$5 billion for the Highway Trust Fund from the FAA transportation bill currently pending before the Senate, killing as many as 170,000 good-paying highway jobs in the process.”

The American Road & Transportation Builders Association [responded](#) to S 2972's omission of a HTF fix stating that, “state governments could expect a 32 percent reduction in federal funding in 2009 if Congress can't agree on a way to replenish the fund.”

Senate Commerce Committee Chairman [Inouye](#) (D-HI) and Ranking Member [Stevens](#) (R-AK) have both urged Congress to pass the FAA bill.

If the bill cannot pass, Congress may look to a 15-month extension to reauthorize FAA through September 2009.

Transportation Tug-of-War

The nation's roads and bridges urgently need attention. The question is who can best provide it. Read the full [article](#).

Falling Bridges

As aging infrastructure becomes harder to ignore, state and local leaders search for new ways to finance solutions. Read the full [article](#).

NARC to Attend National Infrastructure Forum

This Friday, NARC will attend the National forum on infrastructure in Washington, DC. The event is sponsored by the [America 2050](#) initiative and supported by the [Rockefeller Foundation](#), the [Lincoln Institute of Land Policy](#) and the Division of United States Studies at the [Woodrow Wilson Center](#). The forum, titled “Rebuilding and Renewing America: Toward a 21st Century Infrastructure Investment Plan,” will launch a civic-led effort to develop a national infrastructure investment plan for the U.S.: a framework for federal investment and complementary actions by states, local government, and the private sector. More on this will be provided post-event.

The following members of Congress are confirmed participants:
Chairman James Oberstar (D-MN)

reauthorization of the Economic Development Administration (EDA) and the implementation of [NARC's policy positions](#). NARC met with Senate Environment and Public Works Committee Minority Professional Staff and Matt Crow, Deputy Assistant Secretary for External Affairs and Communications at EDA, respectively, to highlight the requests of NARC's membership. NARC will continue these talks at an upcoming EDA briefing by the Administration on their recently released [bill](#).

To help NARC in EDA reauthorization, please send us any comments you might have on the Administration's proposal, including legislative changes or additional ideas that would assist your region. Also, please send examples of how the current EDA programs are used in your region and if the implementation of these programs has led to success.

Let NARC know your legislative agenda, policy priorities and if you'll be visiting DC — contact Shannon Menard at 202.986.1032, x.217 or [email](#).

The following members of Congress are confirmed participants:
Chairman James Oberstar (D-MN)
Congressman Earl Blumenauer (D-OR)
Congresswoman Rosa DeLauro (D-CT)
Congressman Tom Petri (R-WI)
Congressman Christopher Shays (R-CT)

Panel and Roundtable Sessions will address:

- Philanthropy's Role: Supporting a Bold, 21st Century Infrastructure Agenda
- Improving Infrastructure and Securing Clean, Affordable Energy
- Infrastructure Investment as the Framework for Equitable, Sustainable, Economic Growth
- Transformative Infrastructure Investments in Water, Transportation, Energy

DEVELOPMENT BRIEF

Proposal to Establish National Innovation Foundation Would Enhance U.S. Global Competitiveness

Innovation – the invention and adoption of new products and practices – is the key to increasing productivity in every industry—whether high- or low-technology. Higher productivity from innovation leads directly to job and wage growth, raising the standard of living. Given the critical role of innovation in the economy, an April [report](#) from the Brookings Institute Metropolitan Policy Program and the Information Technology & Innovation Foundation recommended that the federal government establish a new National Innovation Foundation (NIF) to support innovative activities in the private sector. Click [HERE](#) for more information.

Conferees Approve Farm Bill Conference Report

Farm bill conferees have completed negotiations of the new five-year bill, but now must ensure there is enough support for the legislation to override a possible presidential veto. The Bush administration has expressed concerns about the bill, including the need for tighter limits on subsidies, opposition to a \$3.8 billion farm disaster aid program and new benefits for the sugar industry, and the overall cost of the bill.

The Senate seems capable to get enough votes to override a veto, but the House, however, will have difficulty convincing some of the fiscal conservatives and liberal Democrats.

The bill's cost is estimated to be about \$570 billion over 10 years, or about \$10 billion more than it would cost to extend current law.

The House and Senate are scheduled to consider the conference report on May 14. Public release of the details of the conference report are pending.

HOMELAND SECURITY BRIEF

Senate Homeland Security Subcommittee Looks to New Disaster Declaration Legislation

The Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Ad Hoc Subcommittee on Disaster Recovery, chaired by Senator Landrieu (D-LA), is looking to drop legislation that would overhaul the Stafford Act (PL 93-288), which authorizes the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to fund post-disaster recoveries. The legislation would include a declaration for a catastrophic event, such as Hurricane Katrina. It would also include language on disaster housing, mental health counseling and change the way the public assistance program works to function as more of a block grant formula during a catastrophe. The Subcommittee will be soliciting input on the legislation from groups around the country. Please contact [Shannon Menard](#) if you have any thoughts on this effort.

ENVIRONMENT BRIEF

House Science and Technology Subcommittee Approves Water Bills

The House Science and Technology Energy and Environment Subcommittee approved two water conservation and utilization bills – [HR 2339](#), the Produced Water Utilization Act of 2007 and [HR 3957](#), Water Use Efficiency and Conservation Research Act. HR 2339 would establish an Energy Department research program on methods to purify water extracted during oil, gas and coalbed methane production so that it can be put to use. HR 3957 would create a research and development program on water-use efficiency and conservation within the EPA. Both bills could be considered by the full committee next month.

Sponsors lower expectations for Lieberman-Warner bill

Senate sponsors of a major global warming bill lowered expectations yesterday on their chances for final passage as aides scrambled behind the scenes to complete a revamped version of the legislation before next month's scheduled floor debate. Read the full [article](#). Click [HERE](#) for NARC Climate Change policy.

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HEARINGS&MARKUPS

Transportation

House Transportation and Infrastructure Subcommittee on Railroads, Pipelines and Hazardous Materials hearing on the reauthorization of Amtrak on 5/14/08 at 10am in 2167 Rayburn.

Economic & Community Development

House Appropriations Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies hearing on fiscal 2009 appropriations for programs under its jurisdiction – The Census Bureau – on TBA in 2358-A Rayburn.

Environment

Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee hearing on the impact of climate change on the reliability, security, economics and design of critical energy infrastructure in coastal regions on 5/13/08 at 10am in 366 Dirksen.

Senate Foreign Relations Subcommittee on International Development and Foreign Assistance, Economic Affairs and International Environmental Protection Subcommittee hearing on "International Deforestation and Climate Change Adaptation" on TBD in 419 Dirksen (witnesses include Stuart Eizenstat - partner, Covington and Burling, representing Sustainable Forestry Management and Heather McGray - senior associate, World Resources Institute).

House Transportation and Infrastructure Subcommittee on Economic Development, Public Buildings and Emergency Management hearing on the practical impact of national flood plain remapping on TBA in 2167 Rayburn.

House Energy and Commerce Committee mark up on HR 3754, a bill to authorize the administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency to accept, as part of a settlement, diesel emission reduction supplemental environmental projects, and for other purposes on TBA in 2123 Rayburn.



REGISTER TODAY!

For additional information on NARC policy initiatives, for in-depth legislative analysis or if you will be in DC, please contact [Shannon Menard](#)—202.986.1032, x.217.

BUILDING REGIONAL COMMUNITIES – LARGE, SMALL, URBAN AND RURAL – THROUGH ADVOCACY, EDUCATION AND TRAINING

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