



**REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION**

*Metropolitan Planning • Public Transportation & Operations • Engineering & Construction*

Metropolitan Planning Organization of Washoe County, Nevada

May 20, 2019

**AGENDA ITEM 5.2**

**TO:** Regional Transportation Commission

**FROM:** Lee G. Gibson, AICP  
Executive Director

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "Lee G. Gibson", is written over the printed name and title of the sender.

**SUBJECT:** Federal Report

Monthly update/messages from RTC Executive Director Lee G. Gibson – *no action will be taken on this item.*

**Federal Update for RTC of Washoe County**  
**Prepared by Cardinal Infrastructure and Thompson Coburn**  
**May 17, 2019 Board Meeting**

**Surface Transportation Reauthorization**

RTC submitted its surface transportation reauthorization policy and project priorities to the congressional delegation. RTC's policy priorities includes changes to the Capital Investment Grant program, restoring funding for the Buses and Bus Facilities program, incentivizing public-private partnerships, enhancing Federal Transit Administration (FTA) resources for grantees, and addressing transportation innovation (connected and autonomous vehicles).

RTC's transit priorities include the Virginia Street Bus RAPID Transit Extension Project, RTC alternative fuels program, RTC Bus Maintenance Facility, research and innovation in development of autonomous transit vehicles. Highway project priorities include the Spaghetti Bowl improvements, US 395 widening, I-80 improvements, Pyramid Highway/US 395 Connector, and I-11.

**BUILD Grant**

The U.S. Department of Transportation (U.S. DOT) has released the Fiscal Year (FY) 2019 Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) grant notice of funding opportunity (NOFO). Applications must be submitted by 8:00 pm ET on July 15, 2019. The FY 2019 appropriations bill provided \$900 million for the BUILD program. For context, overall, applicants in 2018 requested more than \$10.9 billion in funding for a program appropriated at \$1.5 billion.

Highlights of this NOFO with noted changes compared to 2018 include:

- Not more than 50 percent of funds (\$450 million) may be awarded to projects located in urban and rural areas (rural area is a population equal to or less than 200,000). The FY 2018 NOFO stated it would allocate no less than 30% of funds to rural areas.
- Similar to the FY 2017 TIGER program, the FY 2019 BUILD program will give special consideration to projects which emphasize improved access to reliable, safe, and affordable transportation for communities in rural areas (this was a provision in FY 2019 appropriations; to use FY 2017 TIGER selection criteria).
- No more than \$90 million/10% of awards can be given to a single state.
- Primary and secondary selection criteria are largely the same as FY 2018 BUILD; please note additions under innovative technologies" starting on page 33 of the NOFO.
- The NOFO adds Executive Order 13858 on strengthening Buy American; therefore, if selected for an award, grantees must be prepared to demonstrate how they will maximize the use of domestic goods, products, and materials in constructing their project
- Under economic competitiveness, the NOFO adds a focus on assessing the impact of the project on Opportunity Zones.

**Transit Security Grant**

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) issued a NOFO for FY 2019 Transit Security Grant Program. FEMA expects to award \$88 million in total program funding. The deadline to apply is May 29, 2019. The purpose of this program is to support the implementation of security initiatives that will protect critical surface transportation infrastructure and the public from acts of terrorism, major disasters, and other emergencies on transit, intra-city bus, ferry, and passenger rail systems. Applicants are required to possess an updated security plan approved by any entities providing transit security and to participate in a Regional Transit Security Working Group.

### **Integrated Mobility Innovation Demonstration Program**

FTA announced a NOFO for \$15 million for the Competitive Funding Opportunity: Integrated Mobility Innovation Demonstration Program. Applications will be accepted until August 6, 2019, at 11:59 p.m. ET. This notice brings together three program areas: Mobility on Demand Sandbox demonstrations; FTA's Strategic Transit Automation Research; and Mobility Payment Integration. There is no minimum or maximum award amount. The federal share of project costs under this program is limited to 80%.

The breakdown of the funding is as follows:

- MOD Sandbox Demonstration (\$8 million)
- Transit Automation (\$5 million); with \$3 million for Automated Advanced Driver Assistance Systems (ADAS) for Transit Buses and \$2 million for Automated Shuttles
- Mobility Payment Integration (\$2 million)

The program's goals are:

- Exploring new business approaches and emerging technology solutions that support transformational mobility services;
- Enabling communities to adopt innovative mobility solutions that enhance transportation efficiency and effectiveness; and
- Facilitating the widespread deployment of proven mobility solutions that foster expanded personal mobility.

Eligible applicants are public transportation agencies, state/local government DOTs, and federally recognized Indian tribes. Eligible project partners include, but are not limited to, bus manufacturers, shared-use mobility providers, automated vehicle technology providers, and universities.

### **Infrastructure**

Speaker Pelosi and Minority Leader Schumer, among other members of House and Senate Democratic leadership, met with President Trump, Secretary Chao, and White House staff to try to set a path to pass an infrastructure bill. Trump told attendees that he likes the number \$2 trillion for an infrastructure plan. Every Democrat in the room pressed the President on what he was willing to do to cover the \$2 trillion price tag, including raising the gas tax and/or taxes on the wealthy. President Trump didn't engage on the question of how to pay for new infrastructure investments, and Democrats are waiting on him to propose something first. We anticipate a second meeting in three weeks to discuss funding.

### **Appropriations**

House appropriators began writing FY 2020 spending bills. Appropriations Chairwoman Lowey is writing bills to coincide with spending limits in legislation written with Budget Committee Chairman Yarmuth. That bill hasn't come to a vote; however, the House adopted a resolution setting an overall discretionary top-line that matches the bill. Getting a head-start on the Senate in marking up appropriations bills, House Democrats believe they can exert some leverage on the spending caps discussion.

On May 8<sup>th</sup>, the House Appropriations Committee acted to advance the subcommittee spending limits. The 30-22 committee vote was along party lines with Republicans objecting to the fact that the division of \$1.295 trillion among the dozen subcommittees, which favors domestic programs over defense and homeland security, hasn't been agreed to by the GOP-controlled Senate and White House. The allocations, known as 302(b)s, include \$51 billion more in overall discretionary spending than was approved for FY 2019, or 4% above the current year. The Transportation-HUD appropriations account was allocated \$75.8 billion, a \$4.7 billion increase from FY 2019 appropriations. Subcommittee markups of individual FY 2020 bills have begun.

### **FTA Personnel**

Alexander Poirot is now FTA Associate Administrator for Government Relations and Bailey Wood is FTA Associate Administrator for Communications. The previous FTA Associate Administrator for Communications and Congressional Affairs was promoted to the Federal Aviation Administration to serve in a similar role, and the FTA position was bifurcated to focus separately on Congress and public relations.

#### *Alex Poirot, Associate Administrator for Government Relations*

Prior to moving to FTA, Poirot served from 2011-2019 as Senior Policy Advisor to Congressman Rob Woodall (R-GA-7) where he was responsible for liaising with the Transportation & Infrastructure Committee along with a portfolio related to armed forces, veterans' affairs, foreign affairs, oversight, energy and commerce, judiciary, science, space, and technology. He also served as Woodall's Deputy Campaign Manager and briefly served as an Aide in the Georgia General Assembly. Alex graduated in 2010 with a B.A. in Speech Communication from the University of Georgia.

#### *Bailey Wood, Associate Administrator for Communications*

Bailey Wood became Director of Communications for FTA in April 2019 after serving as Vice President at The Farley Group - an advocacy and communications consulting firm. From 2014-2018, Wood served as Vice President of Communications for the National Stone Sand and Gravel Association where he led a team to advance the industry's strategic communications goals and state chapter relations. He was Senior Director of Legislative Affairs and Communications for the National Automobile Dealers Association from 2006-2014 where he led the creation of the first ever advocacy communications strategy covering a wide array of issues including financial services, environmental policies, intellectual property rights, tax and regulatory matters. Wood also worked as President of his own public affairs firm and in various U.S. House offices as Communications Director and Press Secretary. Offices included former Rep. Christopher Cox (R-CA) and former Rep. Paul Gillmor (R-OH). Bailey received a B.A. in Political Science from Syracuse University in 1995.

### **USDOT Personnel**

Anne Reinke, who was most recently a top lobbyist at CSX, is now Deputy Assistant Secretary of Intergovernmental Affairs at U.S. DOT.

Morteza Farajian, a top official in the Virginia Department of Transportation, is now Executive Director of the Build America Bureau at U.S. DOT.

President Trump nominated John Kramer to be the Chief Financial Officer of the Department of Transportation and to be appointed Assistant Secretary for Budget and Programs. Mr. Kramer has served as Deputy Assistant Secretary for Budget and Finance in the Office of the Secretary at the Department of Transportation since December 2017. Prior to this role, he served as CFO/COO at Bailiwick Investments LLC, a private equity investment company with investments in the US in transportation, software, healthcare and consumer products; primarily aimed at start-up companies.