



REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

Metropolitan Planning • Public Transportation & Operations • Engineering & Construction

Metropolitan Planning Organization of Washoe County, Nevada

MEETING DATE: June 17, 2022

AGENDA ITEM 6.2

From: Bill Thomas, Executive Director

Monthly update/messages from RTC Executive Director Bill Thomas on federal matters related to the RTC – *no action will be taken on this item.*

ATTACHMENT

- A. Written report prepared by Cardinal Infrastructure and Thompson Coburn

Federal Update for the Regional Transportation Commission of Washoe County
Prepared by Cardinal Infrastructure and Thompson Coburn
June 17, 2022 Board Meeting
Prepared June 10, 2022

Fiscal Year 2023 Budget/Appropriations

The House has deemed a discretionary spending cap for fiscal year 2023 that matches President Biden's roughly \$1.6 trillion budget request, as part of the rule governing consideration of the two gun bills. House appropriators will begin subcommittee markups the week of June 13th for a first tranche of the 12 annual spending bills. The hope is to finish marking up before the July 4th recess and have a package ready to vote on in September, avoiding the need to pass continuing resolutions on Sept. 30th. Community Project Funding/Congressionally Directed Spending (earmarks) are included in this process. RTC Washoe is well-positioned with Lemmon Drive being supported by Sen. Cortez Masto, Sen. Rosen, and Rep. Amodei at \$4.5 million and the Villanova Maintenance Facility Project being supported by both senators at \$4.5 million. This is not a guarantee of funding, but it is a good sign for RTC to at least receive some level of funds from the program.

Department of Transportation - Nominations

Veronica Vanterpool has been appointed to be deputy administrator of the Federal Transit Administration (FTA). Vanterpool has served as senior advisor in the FTA Office of the Administrator since August 2021.

The Senate confirmed Steve Cliff to be NHTSA administrator, marking the first time the safety agency has had a Senate-confirmed leader since January 2017. The Senate confirmed Cliff by voice vote before leaving for a 10-day Memorial Day recess. The long-awaited action comes a week after NHTSA released its preliminary 2021 roadway fatality figures showing the largest-ever year-over-year increase in traffic fatalities, continuing a climb that started with the pandemic.

COVID Relief Funding Flexibility

The U.S. Senate rejected legislation providing additional funding for Covid-19 pandemic costs including language allowing municipalities to redirect previously appropriated funds for Covid relief to transportation projects. The bill would have authorized states and local governments to use up to \$123 billion of Fiscal Recovery for transportation projects. The bill appears to be dead for the time being due to the objections by some Senators that there has been enough money provided previously for these purposes that has gone unspent.

Infrastructure Law Implementation

The U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) has shared a [calendar of upcoming notices](#) for your awareness and planning.

The [Transit-Oriented Development Pilot Program](#) "provides funding to communities to integrate land use and transportation planning in new fixed guideway and core capacity transit project corridors," FTA reported on May 26. "As required by statute, any comprehensive or site-specific planning funded through the pilot program must examine ways to improve economic development and ridership potential, foster multimodal connectivity and accessibility, improve transit access for pedestrian and bicycle traffic, engage the private sector, identify infrastructure needs, and enable mixed-use development near transit stations."

The Federal Highway Administration is announcing that it is ready to begin accepting applications for competitive grants to replace bridges under a program that will have \$12.5 billion available over five years. That money, including \$2.4 billion this year, is in addition to the \$27 billion in bridge funding over five years awarded directly to states last year. The competitive program, which is open to individual communities, regional planning organizations and tribal communities as well as states, is designed to provide funds to address economically important bridges in or near poor condition before they have severe weight restrictions or have to be closed.

Build America Buy America

DOT approved the 180-day temporary waiver to the new IIJA/BIL Buy America Requirements for Construction Materials. There were 80+ comments submitted during the 15-day notice period and some are directly addressed by the Department in the attached document "Fed_Reg 2022_11195". Legislation increased Buy America requirements by adding "construction materials". As currently defined, construction materials include:

An article, material, or supply—other than an item of primarily iron or steel; a manufactured product; cement and cementitious materials; aggregates such as stone, sand, or gravel; or aggregate binding agents or additives—that is or consists primarily of: non-ferrous metals; plastic and polymer-based products (including polyvinylchloride, composite building materials, and polymers used in fiber optic cables); glass (including optic glass); lumber; or drywall.

The Department and the Made in America Office will continue to provide and update guidance as necessary. DOT may consider public interest waivers in the future, but only sparingly, if at all. Over the next 5 months, the Department expects stakeholders/grantees to implement processes to ensure compliance. During this period, it is still possible (and recommended) to submit comments to DOT about challenges procuring materials or shortages that you encounter. Cardinal is more than happy to assist with submitting comments.

Workforce Development

The White House is continuing its efforts to improve supply chain resilience. One method they've employed is an attempt to expedite commercial driver's license applications to get more heavy-duty vehicle drivers on the road to keep goods and people moving. In other workforce development issues, with federal monies from the IIJA starting to roll out, contractors and other groups are facing challenges with hiring enough labor to meet project demands. According to the Associated General Contractors of America, job openings in April were at their highest amount ever, The Bureau of Labor Statistics reported that the amount of construction jobs currently open is 494,000. While the challenge of finding adequately skilled labor is nothing new to contractors and builders, the current number of openings has caused some uneasiness about the ability to follow-through on projects funded by the IIJA.

Supply Chain

Despite challenges, there are signs of progress in the U.S. goods movement chain. U.S. ports—including the Ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach collectively—imported more containers than any previous January. The total number of container ships waiting for berths at U.S. ports has dropped by 35% since peaking in early February and freight railroads' weekly intermodal movements in March approached their highest levels of 2022. Goods are successfully being delivered to shelves and retail inventories excluding autos are at their highest levels in history and 6% above pre-pandemic levels, the DOT said.

The White House and the U.S. Department of Transportation announced on Friday, May 27, that retired Gen. Stephen R. Lyons will serve as envoy for the Supply Chain Disruptions Task Force. Lyons, former commander of the U.S. Transportation Command, will take over the task force's role of envoy from John

D. Porcari. Lyons will work with the Department of Transportation, the White House National Economic Council, ports, rail, trucking and other private companies across the nation's supply logistics system to address bottlenecks, speed up the movement of goods and help lower costs for American families.

Traffic Safety

Witnesses [appeared](#) before a House Transportation and Infrastructure subcommittee hearing on roadway safety and spoke to the surge in traffic fatalities, including the rise in deaths among pedestrians and bicyclists. The National League of Cities submitted several recommendations, among them that states adopt the "Safe System" approach, as well as other actions for Congress, the administration, state departments of transportation and the road safety community to take. While new federal funds to help combat the rise in fatalities are available through the bipartisan infrastructure law, rising construction and labor costs will reduce the number of safety-related projects that can be undertaken, speakers said.