

National Association of County Engineers

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NACE UPDATE

The almost bi-weekly newsletter for Board members & Committee Chairs

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(Note: Sources of information include the AASHTO Journal, NACo staff, Senate and House publications, the Federal Highway Administration, and other association news journals)

National Forest Counties & Schools Coalition Actions

NACE is a member of this coalition and the below provides status on the effort to reauthorize the Secure Rural Schools and Communities Act which also provides funding for rural roads in those affected areas.

HR 3058 – Approved by House Natural Resources Committee

The effort to reauthorize the Secure Rural Schools and Communities Act took a monumental step forward on September 26th, when the House Natural Resources Committee approved HR 3058 (DeFazio) on a unanimous voice vote. The bill was modified on a bipartisan basis to provide a four year reauthorization of the Secure Rural Schools and Communities Act and a ramping up of PILT funding to the 100% of authorization level in year four of the bill. These provisions were inserted into the bill in order to fit into the available natural resource based budget offsets available to the Committee. The Coalition is encouraging leadership of both parties to move quickly to move the bill to the Senate for concurrence in a Conference Committee.

House Bill and Senate Bill Differ but are clearly Reconcilable in a Conference

The House bill calls for a four year reauthorization, a four year ramping down of Secure Rural Schools and Communities payments, and a four year ramping up of PILT payments. The House bill does not reauthorize Title II and III, and it holds eight states harmless in 2008 from a decline in payment levels instead of three. On the other hand, the Senate Amendment (SA 709) calls for a five year extension of Secure Rural Schools and Communities Act (SRSCA), only three states being held harmless from declining payments in 2008 (Oregon, California, and Washington), and full funding of PILT in the last four years of the bill. The Senate version also amends and reauthorizes Titles II and III of SRSCA.

The Coalition supports both versions of the bill and we believe that a compromise bill can be put together in a Conference Committee that reflects the best elements of each. In particular we believe the final bill should be for five years, provide for full funding of PILT after the first year, provide hold harmless protection for all eight states (Oregon, California, Washington, South Dakota, Texas, Louisiana, South Carolina and Pennsylvania) that would experience declining payments in 2008 under the new formula, and include the Senate language for the revision and reauthorization of Titles II and III of SRSCA. Such a bill would provide economic stability and predictability to forest counties and schools for five years, give leaders in these counties opportunities to explore

new technologies, new economic development opportunities, and time to restore an ecologically sustainable level of forest management in our forest counties.

Next Steps – A Continuing Call to Action!

We need to keep up the pressure on Members of the House of Representatives and the Senate. Encourage both of the respective bodies to take prompt action to include the contents of SA 709 (Senate bill) and HR 3058 (House bill) in legislation that is headed to the President's desk for signature.

We believe that it is imperative that Congress acts to approve full funding of PILT and extension of the Secure Rural Schools and Communities Act before they go home in November. We, as leaders of our communities, must not let up! The grassroots pressure on Congress to act now must be maintained at a high level of intensity!

Please contact your Congressperson and Senators. Ask them to contact the leadership of their party and insist that approval of a multi-year extension of SRSCA and PILT is absolutely essential before Congress adjourns. Tell them that this must be done to avoid the layoffs and service disruptions that will start in January 2008.

Congress Passes Continuing Resolution to Expire on November 16, 2007

With the new fiscal year beginning on Monday, and with no spending bills passed to continue the operation of federal agencies, Congress enacted a six-week continuing resolution (CR). The resolution would extend until November 16 all appropriations accounts at the same level as enacted in the final FY 2007 continuing resolution. Congress earlier this year enacted a continuing resolution for the remainder of FY 2007. Within the U.S. Department of Transportation, the federal-aid highway program appears likely to be issued 47/366ths of one year's worth of obligation authority, or 12.8 percent of Fiscal Year 2007 funding. The CR also continues authorization and funding for the Airport Improvement Program and other aviation programs for six weeks, as well as extending for that period that aviation taxes which support the Airport and Airway Trust Fund. The Transportation, Housing and Urban Development appropriations bills (H.R. 3074) have been passed by both the House and Senate, but conferees have yet to meet.

Rescissions Having Increasing Impact on State Transportation Budgeting

Congressional rescissions of contract authority from state transportation budgets—which will cut transportation department federal-fund access by \$22 billion between 2002 and 2009 and are slated to take a bite of \$8.3 billion in Fiscal Year 2009 alone—are beginning to severely hamper states' ability to plan for and roll out transportation projects, state officials say. Congress began allowing apportionments for the highway program in excess of the actual amounts of funds that could be committed due to obligations in the 1970s. It was felt that practice was beneficial, in that it gave states more flexibility to make choices among various federal-aid categories. But in FY 2002, Congress began rescinding portions of the balances. Although many states have not felt a negative effect from that practice, other states' officials are concerned that may be about to change because of the major rescission slated for FY 2009 under the provisions of the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU), the current surface-transportation finance act. There is also concern that Congress is moving to restrict states' ability to choose the categories of spending from which the rescissions will be taken.

2007 Traffic Signal Report Card Released

During a press conference on October 8th in Washington, D.C. the National Transportation Operations Coalition released its traffic signal report. The report graded traffic signals with a D, a slight improvement over the D- from the 2005 assessment. The full report is available at the ITE website www.ite.org/reportcard/ According to the report's findings, an investment in signal timing improvements as little as \$3 per U.S. household each year will produce benefits of \$45 billion per year and will yield shorter commute times, improved air quality, better fuel efficiency and happier drivers. The report card shows how local jurisdictions such as cities, counties and states can reap large rewards, such as mitigating congestion and lessening fuel consumption, by making small changes in the way they manage and operate their traffic signal systems. The report also highlights several jurisdictions that have been successful in making changes since the 2005 report card was released. The Traffic Signal Report Card findings are based on self-assessment surveys completed by 417 agencies in 47 states.

7th Annual National Conference on Asset Management Being Held November 6-8, 2007.

A National Conference on Asset Management will be held from November 6-8, 2007 in New Orleans LA. This conference will provide a forum for practitioners, researchers, and others to share information on a wide range of issues related to transportation asset management. The conference will build on six previous national conferences, recognizing the significant progress made in Transportation Asset Management. The conference program will include sessions on important emerging issues in transportation asset management. Among them will be organizational leadership, management systems, optimization, and training and education. The conference will feature three thematic tracks and four special topic areas. For more information visit <http://www.trb.org/conferences/2007/Asset>

NACE is co-host for IBTTA Transportation Finance Summit on December 2-4, 2007

The National Association of County Engineers is a co-host of International Bridge, Tunnel & Turnpike Association's (IBTTA) Transportation Finance Summit to be held at the Fairmont Hotel in Washington, DC, on December 2 - 4, 2007. The purpose of the Summit is to bring together transportation financing experts from around the world to discuss practical and workable solutions to the transportation funding challenges faced by all levels of government and the private sector. For more information visit the IBTTA Transportation Finance Summit web page (<http://www.ibtta.org/Events/eventdetail.cfm?ItemNumber=2398>)

SAFETY COMPASS NEWSLETTER: OCTOBER/NOVEMBER 2007

http://www.trb.org/news/blurbs_detail.asp?id=8221

The U.S. Federal Highway Administration has released the latest issue of its Safety Compass newsletter. The newsletter covers program delivery, best practices, research, training, regulations, and legislation designed to help improve and establish a more productive national and local safety program. Articles in this issue include the following:

- * A Successful Strategy to Improve Safety on Local Roads
- * The National Work Zone Safety Information Clearinghouse
- * Spotlight: Put the Brakes on Fatalities Day
- * Federal Lands Barrier Guide
- * Resources, Tools, Technology

DATA ANALYSIS WORKING GROUP FORUM ON PAVEMENT PERFORMANCE DATA ANALYSIS

[-http://www.trb.org/news/blurbs_detail.asp?id=8194](http://www.trb.org/news/blurbs_detail.asp?id=8194)

TRB's Data Analysis Working Group (DAWG) will conduct a full-day forum on pavement performance data analysis, on Saturday, January 12, 2008, in Washington, D.C. The forum will be held immediately prior to the TRB 87th Annual Meeting, January 13-17, 2008. All attendees of the Annual Meeting who are interested in the analysis of pavement performance data are welcome to attend without charge. Additional information on the forum, as well as information for individuals interested in presenting at the meeting, is available in the forum announcement.

SIMULATING THE EFFECTS OF HOT-MIX ASPHALT AGING FOR PERFORMANCE TESTING AND PAVEMENT STRUCTURAL DESIGN

http://www.trb.org/news/blurbs_detail.asp?id=8184

TRB's National Cooperative Highway Research Program (NCHRP) Research Results Digest 324: Simulating the Effects of Hot-Mix Asphalt Aging for Performance Testing and Pavement Structural Design summarizes the results of an NCHRP effort that examined the limitations associated with provisional protocols on hardening potential of asphalt binders and mixes, and explored ways to enhance the predictive capabilities of these protocols. Detailed information on the conduct and results of these experiments was published as NCHRP Web-Only Document 113.

CRITERIA FOR SELECTING HYDRAULIC MODELS

http://www.trb.org/news/blurbs_detail.asp?id=8151

TRB's National Cooperative Highway Research Program (NCHRP) Web-Only Document 106: Criteria for Selecting Hydraulic Models explores develop a decision tool for selecting either a one- or a two-dimensional hydraulic model when examining flow through bridge crossings. The decision tool is designed to provide a procedure for selecting the most appropriate model for a particular application incorporating site conditions, design elements, available resources, and project constraints.

CONCRETE PAVEMENT TECHNOLOGY UPDATE: AUGUST 2007

http://www.trb.org/news/blurbs_detail.asp?id=8196

The U.S. Federal Highway Administration has released the latest issue of its periodic newsletter that provides updates on new products and research findings emerging from studies conducted as part of the Concrete Pavement Technology Program.

RURAL AMERICA AT A GLANCE, 2007

http://www.trb.org/news/blurbs_detail.asp?id=8207

Rural America at a Glance is a brochure produced by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Economic Research Service that highlights recent indicators of social and economic conditions in rural areas. The brochure is designed to provide information on key rural conditions and trends for use by public and private decision makers and others in efforts to enhance the economic opportunities and quality of life for people in rural communities.

GROWTH IN HIGHWAY CONSTRUCTION AND MAINTENANCE COSTS

http://www.trb.org/news/blurbs_detail.asp?id=8209

The U.S. Department of Transportation's Office of Inspector General has issued a report that explores the growth in highway construction and maintenance costs. The report examines the extent of recent cost increases for highway construction and maintenance projects, whether the cost increases are the product of transitory factors or indicative of longer-term structural changes that need to be incorporated into future transportation

funding plans, and the degree to which the cost increases are subject to regional variations.