Congressional Outlook

**Week of June 9th**

The House and Senate are in session this week. Both the fiscal year (FY) 2015 Transportation-HUD and Agriculture-FDA spending bills will receive floor consideration in the House. The full House Appropriations Committee will consider both the Military Construction/Veterans Affairs and Department of Homeland Security spending bills, and the Energy and Water Development Subcommittee will mark up its spending bill. Meanwhile, the Senate Appropriations Committee will mark up and consider the Labor, Health and Human Services, Education spending bill.

Legislation addressing lapses in the Department of Veterans Affairs health-care system could be on the floor in both chambers.

The Senate Judiciary Committee’s Constitution, Civil Rights and Human Rights Subcommittee is scheduled to mark up a proposed constitutional amendment that would reverse the Supreme Court’s decision in the Citizens United campaign-finance case. The amendment would give Congress and states the authority to regulate and limit the raising and spending of money for political campaigns.

This Wednesday, the House Transportation and Infrastructure’s Water and Environment Subcommittee will hold an oversight hearing on the Obama Administration’s controversial proposed Clean Water Act (CWA) rulemaking setting new definitions of “waters of the U.S.” (WOTUS) that are jurisdictional under the CWA. The hearing was rescheduled after the initial hearing was postponed due to the death and funeral of former House T&I Chairman Jim Oberstar (D-MN).

**Week in Review**

**DOT Publishes Notice of Rulemaking and Policy**
Guidance Implementing MAP-21

Last Monday, the U.S. Department of Transportation published in the Federal Register two items of interest to metropolitan planning organizations and member agencies, including cities and counties. Both notices were jointly published by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and are aimed at implementing the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP-21). For more, click here.

EPA Releases Draft of New Climate Rule

Last Monday, the EPA released a draft of a new rule to regulate carbon-dioxide emissions from power plants. The rule sets a target of a reduction in emissions by 30% of 2005 levels by 2030, and achieves it by setting different targets for each state. The targets depend on the energy mix of the states, so there is significant variation. The specifics of emissions reduction plans are left up to the states, similar to the implementation of the Affordable Care Act, or as economist Tyler Cowen notes, early versions of the Clean Air Act. The Obama administration announced that states would have until June 2016 to submit an emissions reduction plan, but the draft suggests that states could have until 2017 - or 2018 if they form a coalition with one or more other states, placing the rule's implementation after the 2016 elections. The EPA will take comments on the rule over the next 120 days, and a final regulation is expected to go into effect in June 2015. Read More...

President Obama Seeks Legacy of Internet in Every School

After announcing its broadband initiative in 2013, the Obama administration says it is on track to ensure that every school has high-speed internet access within five years. The FCC is in the process of updating E-Rate to divert funds from outdated technologies like pagers and copper telephone networks to expanding broadband and Wi-Fi access. E-Rate is a program that helps schools and libraries to obtain affordable communications services and technology and is funded through fees on monthly telephone bills. $2 billion of E-Rate funds have already been allocated for school broadband projects. The FCC is also planning to designate more resources to setting up wireless networks to increase internet access capabilities within schools. Read More...

Senate Appropriations Committee Advances FY 2015 T-HUD Appropriations Bill

The Senate Appropriations Committee approved a $54.4 billion Transportation-Housing and Urban Development spending bill last Thursday. Overall, the bill would appropriate more funding for transit, Amtrak and the Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) discretionary grant program compared to its House counterpart. The Senate bill would provide $550 million in TIGER funding for fiscal 2015, a significant increase over the $100 million that would be provided in the House bill. The Senate bill also would provide about $600 million in additional funding for transit programs compared to its House counterpart. In addition, Amtrak would receive $1.39 billion in funding through the Senate T-HUD bill, consistent with current levels but about $200 million more than what is offered in the House bill. FY 2015 discretionary budget authority in the bill is about $3.6 billion more than the FY 2014 enacted level, but subcommittee ranking member Susan Collins (R-ME) said that is misleading because appropriators had less money to work with due to a decline in federal housing receipts that are used as offsets.
Senate Appropriations Committee Also Advances FY 2015 CJS Appropriations Bill

The Senate Appropriations Committee advanced a $51.2 billion Commerce, Justice, Science spending bill, a reduction of $398 million from FY 2014 levels, equal to the House bill, and $1 billion more than the President's request. The CJS bill authorizes funds for the Department of Justice to conduct criminal and civil investigations into the Veterans Administration over allegations that the VA falsified patient records to conceal long wait times. It also increases funding to NASA to $17.9 billion, higher than both the President's request and the House bill, and contains $1.1 billion in funding to programs to counter gun violence.

Congressional Schedule

Tuesday, June 10
- House Natural Resources Committee's Subcommittee on Energy and Mineral Resources oversight hearing on "Whole Lotta Shakin: An Examination of America's Earthquake Early Warning System Development and Implementation."
- Senate Environment and Public Works Committee's Subcommittee on Oversight hearing to examine protection taxpayers and ensuring accountability, focusing on faster Superfund cleanups for healthier communities.

Wednesday, June 11
- House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee's Subcommittee on Water Resources and Environment hearing on "Potential Impacts of Proposed Changes to the Clean Water Act Jurisdictional Rule.
- House Small Business Full Committee hearing on the "FAA's NextGen Mandate: Benefits and Challenges for General Aviation."

Thursday, June 12
- House Natural Resources Committee's Subcommittee on Energy and Mineral Resources oversight hearing on "American Energy Jobs: Opportunities for Innovation."
- Senate Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry Full Committee hearing to examine the importance of child nutrition programs to our nation's health, economy and national security.