

## The Legislative Front – 2014



As the construction season hits mid-year and NRC member track construction and maintenance contractors continue to crank out quality projects, we also keep one eye on the action, or lack thereof, in Washington DC. There are multiple pieces of legislation making their way through the Congressional process that have the potential to affect our industry, so our association staff and members will continue to advocate aggressively for federal policies that support infrastructure investment and we will oppose any unnecessary regulatory burdens.

The highest profile is the pending reauthorization of MAP-21, the surface transportation reauthorization bill. This bill funds both the federal highways program through the Highway Trust Fund, and also much of the federal investment in rail transit through the Mass Transit Account. As of this writing, the accounts are set to dip below acceptable minimum balances by mid July, which would result in delayed payments to States and transit agencies. The NRC is pushing for a temporary fix to the accounts that would get the program to the end of 2014, and then we are supporting a robust, long-term (4-6 years) full reauthorization of the program to be completed in the lame duck session of Congress in November and December.

In addition to an increase in overall program funding above existing levels, the NRC supports eligibility for passenger and freight rail investments from highway accounts to the extent that those accounts are funded by non-gas tax sources, new dedicated funding for intercity passenger rail, new dedicated funding for a TIGER-like multimodal grant program focused on freight, provisions to expedite project delivery and make sure rail projects have the same streamlining provisions as highway and transit projects, expanding the Section 130 grade crossing program, and providing funding to support the implementation of Positive Train Control.

The other major piece of funding legislation being considered that will affect our industry in the FY2015 transportation appropriations bill. A version of the bill has passed the House, and a separate version has passed the relevant Senate Committee and is awaiting action in the Senate. On each of the programs that we are concerned about, we support the higher funding levels provided by the Senate. Those crucial programs are the Amtrak capital and operating support accounts, TIGER grants, Federal Transit Administration formula funds, and FTA New Starts/Small Starts Capital Investment Grants.

The NRC Grassroots program continues to gain steam with more events being scheduled to support

the rail industry throughout the country. We invite our member companies to take advantage of the opportunity presented here to showcase their company while fostering relationships with their congressional members. These events allow our elected representatives to see firsthand what we do as contractors and suppliers and to understand the importance of our industry. The NRC also improves its ability to advocate for the rail industry in Washington DC by holding these events. Contact Ashley Bosch, VP of Grassroots Advocacy and Events, at 202-715-1247 or [abosch@nrcma.org](mailto:abosch@nrcma.org) to put together an event involving your company.

I recently attended an event held in Elgin, IL with Congresswoman Tammy Duckworth, hosted by Chicago Metra. This event focused on funding needed to replace an existing railroad bridge and construct a second bridge, part of the Metra operating system serving this suburb of Chicago. The construction of these two new bridges would eliminate a current bottleneck for trains going into and out of Chicago.

The planned project will replace this existing single-track bridge and add a second bridge structure, creating new double-track service and improving passenger service for commuters (upwards of 7 million passengers a year) who use this line to commute into and out of Chicago, as well as improve the freight service that operates on this line. The current bridge is the only single-track section on this entire run between Chicago and Elgin. Representative Duckworth is a strong advocate for the rail industry and we thank her for her leadership.

The event in Elgin was well planned and included both television and newspaper coverage. Media coverage such as this helps the rail industry gain support from our elected officials for funding requests for projects needed to improve both passenger and freight service.

Finally, two upcoming events for your calendar:

- The AREMA conference, Sunday September 28 through Wednesday October 1 at the Hilton Chicago.
- The NRC 2015 Conference and NRC/REMSA Exhibition will be in Hollywood, FL at the Westin Diplomat from Wednesday January 7 through Saturday Jan 10. Registration will open shortly.

For additional information regarding the equipment auction as well as other NRC upcoming events, please visit [www.nrcma.org](http://www.nrcma.org).

Have a safe day.

by Bill Dorris,  
NRC Chairman



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