

January 2015 Monthly Report for MTC

To: Steve Heminger, Executive Director
From: Tom Bulger, President, GRI
Re: Monthly Report for January 2015
Date: January 30, 2015

- **114th Congress Begins**
- **Transportation Research Board (TRB) Washington Meeting**
- **MTC Washington, D.C. Meetings**
- **MTC Washington, D.C. March 2015 Fly-In**
- **United States Conference of Mayors Mid-Winter Meeting**
- **Federal Gas/Diesel User Fee**
- **Transportation & Infrastructure Committee Resets**
- **Comings & Goings**
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114th Congress Begins

The 114th Congress was sworn in on January 6, 2015. The start day for a new Congress is filled with best wishes as constituents travel to Washington to join their old and new Members of Congress. I was able to attend the Bay Area's new Representative Mark DeSaulnier's swearing in reception on January 6. Joining me was MTC Chair Amy Worth as well as many Contra Costa County well-wishers.

Congressman DeSaulnier has been appointed to the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee and to the House Education & the Workforce Committee.

Transportation Research Board (TRB) Washington Meeting

On January 12 through January 15, I attended the Annual TRB meeting in Washington, D.C. with Steve Heminger. Highlights of the TRB meeting include: a presentation on the engineering challenges of building the Eastern Span of the Bay Bridge, a luncheon speech by Victor Mendez, Deputy Secretary at the United States Department of Transportation and a visit with former Secretary of Transportation Norman Mineta.

MTC Washington, D.C. Meetings

During the TRB meeting we conducted the following meetings with MTC staff:

- Rep. Nancy Pelosi's staff
- Rep. Eric Swalwell's staff
- Rep. Barbara Lee's staff
- Georgia Gann, Mayor of New York City, N.Y. Washington D.C. office

Washington, D.C. March 2015 Fly-In

The annual MTC Washington, D.C. Fly-In is set for the week of March 16, both Houses of Congress are scheduled to be in session that week. This is a change from past years as the American Public Transportation Association Legislative Conference is the previous week of March 9, when the House of Representatives is not in session.

Therefore, the annual California Transportation Capitol Hill Reception will be on March 17 at 6:00 PM in the House Transportation & Infrastructure Committee Room. All of the Washington, D.C. logistics associated with the reception have been completed. Save the Date invitations will be forwarded shortly to over 1,100 invitees. Also this year, we will be partnering with our Southern California transportation and business organizations.

United States Conference of Mayors Mid-Winter Meeting

On January 21 and 22, I attended the United States Conference of Mayors Mid-Winter meeting in Washington, D.C. The highlight of this meeting was Chairman of the House Transportation & Infrastructure, Rep. Bill Shuster (R-Pa.) remark that he does not support raising the federal gas/diesel user fee.

Federal Gas/Diesel User Fee

With oil prices at or near \$45/barrel, many unlikely advocates have suggested major increases in the federal gas/diesel user fee. The conservative columnist, Charles Krauthammer on January 9 wrote that the hike should be a dollar a gallon. Senate Committee on Environment & Public Works (EPW) Chairman Jim Inhofe (R-Okla.) said that he is open to considering raising the gas tax as a way to pay for the dwindling Highway Trust Fund. Senate Finance Committee Chairman Orrin G. Hatch (R-Utah) said we'll have to look at that. I'm looking at everything-every possible way of taking care of the highway bill. Senate Commerce, Science, & Transportation Committee Chairman John Thune (R-S.D.) said that he didn't favor raising the gas tax, but also said that no highway funding mechanism ideas should be taken off the table. Senate Minority Whip Dick Durbin (D-Ill.) said, now's the time to do it. Senator Barbara Boxer (D-Calif.) announced on January 29 that the deficit in the Highway Trust Fund is less than had been projected. Senator Boxer reported that the Trust Fund's shortfall is \$13 Billion over six years rather than \$18 Billion.

Something has to happen by the end of May 2015.

Transportation & Infrastructure Committee Resets

On January 13, Committee Chairman Bill Shuster (R-Pa.) announced his selections for the Committee's subcommittees for the 114th Congress. Noteworthy are Rep. Sam Graves (R-Mo.), Highways & Transit Subcommittee and Rep. Jeff Denham (R-Calif.) Railroads, Pipelines and Hazardous Material. Rep. Jared Huffman (D-Calif.) has been appointed to the Committee and assigned to the Highways and Transit Subcommittee.

Comings & Goings

- Jeff Davis, formerly the producer of "Transportation Weekly" has joined the Eno Center for Transportation.
- Shant Boyajian, formerly Majority Council at House Transportation & Infrastructure Committee's Highways & Transit Subcommittee has moved to the Senate EPW Committee.
- Jim Kolb, Staff Director to the minority Highways & Transit Subcommittee, joined a Washington, D.C. law firm.

Meetings

- National Association of Regional Council's (NARC) Washington Representatives.
- See additional meetings above.