



Infrastructure

In February, the Trump Administration introduced a long-awaited outline for a vision for a new 10-year, \$1.5 trillion federal infrastructure package. The administration has stated that this document is open to revisions by Congress as they look to craft legislation.

In NYS, municipally-owned roads and bridges account for 87 percent of the state's 110,000 miles of roadways and 50 percent of the State's 18,000 bridges. These locally owned roads and bridges are deteriorating at a rapid rate as counties struggle to find adequate funding for their maintenance, replacement, and upgrading.

- **New, dedicated federal funding must be part of any new infrastructure package:** While NACo supports public-private partnerships (P3's) for project development, it is important that any infrastructure package provide increased federal funding where private investment is not appropriate.
- **Maintain current federal funding contribution level up to 80%:** In addition to concerns about the lack of new federal funding and the availability of private sector partners, NYS counties are concerned about the proposed changes to federal matching funds. The plan states “an incentive grant could not exceed 20% of new revenue,” thereby requiring state and local governments to increase their funding share. This is a fundamental change from the current 80% federal match formula.
- **Preserve the tax-exempt status of municipal bonds** and support other bond financing proposals that expand options for communities.
- **Promote long-term solvency of the highway trust fund:** In order to maintain a robust infrastructure network, the Highway Trust Fund must remain solvent. NACo advocates for an “all tools in the toolbox” approach to accomplishing this, including increased usage of user-fees for infrastructure.
- **Provide an environment for innovative financing:** NACo supports innovative financing mechanisms including, but not limited to, qualified tax credit bonds; infrastructure banks; the Transportation Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (TIFIA); and public-private partnerships that allow local governments and transportation authorities to leverage federal financing for capital projects.
- **Streamline the federal permit process:** NACo supports streamlining the federal permitting process, which can reduce project delays resulting from duplicative reviews and procedures.

County and local government representatives should have an active voice in any decision-making body that determines how these infrastructure funds are allocated.



Opioid Abuse/Mental Illness

The United States Committee on Homeland Security and Government Affairs recently released a report suggesting a link between the expansion of Medicaid under the Affordable Care Act (ACA) and the nationwide opioid epidemic.

- In New York State there has been no evidence shown by the Department of Health or the Inspector General's Office that the expansion of Medicaid has worsened the opioid abuse problem, NYS Counties have seen the ACA offer improved access to safe, evidence-based pain treatment rather than the misuse of narcotics.
- The Internet System for Prescription Monitoring Programs (STOP) and the education of medical professionals on the dangers of opioids has resulted in a 90% drop in the number of "doctor shoppers" - patients who present to five or more prescribers and five or more pharmacies receiving a controlled substance within a three-month period.

We urge Congress to maintain at least consistent funding for substance abuse and mental health services provided through the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) and pass legislation that enhances counties' abilities to provide local systems of care. Funding in future appropriations bill should be held to at least FY 2017 levels, especially the Community Mental Health Services (CMHS) and Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment (SAPT) block grants.

In 1988, Congress created the High Intensity Drug Trafficking Areas (HIDTA) program. The program provides assistance to Federal, state, local, and tribal law enforcement agencies operating in areas determined to be critical drug-trafficking regions of the United States. This grant program is administered by the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP).

There are currently 28 HIDTAs, which include approximately 18 percent of all counties in the United States and 66 percent of the U.S. population. In New York, there are 25 counties with HIDTA designation, primarily downstate and along the western and northernmost borders. At the local level, the HIDTAs are directed and guided by executive boards composed of an equal number of regional Federal and non-Federal (state, local, and tribal) law enforcement leaders. Since 2002, the HIDTAs program has helped local law enforcement fight opioids and other drug trafficking.

Under President Donald Trump's budget proposal, the HIDTA program would shift under the control of the Justice Department in a cost-cutting measure.

This program has been successful and we oppose this measure and are concerned the funding mechanism would be lost if moved under a different jurisdiction.



Families First–Foster Care Maintenance Payments Program

The Family First Prevention Services Act contains provisions that would significantly reduce the likelihood of receiving federal Title IV-E funding for many foster children placed in residential programs (congregate care placements) and imposes unfunded bureaucratic mandates. Family First limits federal reimbursement to certain categories of congregate care, one being the newly created Qualified Residential Treatment Program (QRTP). New York’s initial estimate indicates we could lose more than \$200 million annually in the federal child welfare funding.

Suggested Amendments:

- Authorize a child specific exception to the 30-day assessment requirement for children placed in a QRTP. We recommend exempting from the 30-day assessment requirement children who have had a recent clinical or medical assessment or probation report authorizing placement other than a foster home, as well as such youth as sex trafficking victims and youth with other needs where placement in a foster home would be dangerous for the youth or others. Exempting certain children from the 30-day assessment requirement would avoid unnecessary reassessments, potential for conflicting opinions, and possible trauma to the child.
- Extend the time period of assessment to 60 days. We recommend extending the time period of assessment on the need for a QRTP placement from 30 days to 60 days. Such extension would eliminate the need for assessment for short-term placements, enable more thorough assessments, address issues with securing the required assessor, and enhance identification and participation by families and other interested persons.
- Eliminate the requirement of a court assessment within 60 days of a QRTP placement and instead allow the issue of appropriateness of continued placement in the congregate setting be part of the periodic permanency hearing. While we support the involvement of the courts, we are concerned about the strict 60-day timeframe that would be outside the control of child welfare agencies. Counties submit that this requirement is an unnecessary imposition that adds additional costs and resources on New York’s already busy family courts. The 60-day court assessment is further redundant of the requirement for an assessment by a qualified individual, which could potentially lead to conflicting opinions and possible trauma to the child being subjected to multiple assessments. For these and other reasons, we recommend amending the legislation to allow states flexibility on how periodic reviews of QRTP placements should be conducted, such as allowing the appropriateness of the placement to be part of the periodic permanency hearing.



911 Diversion

In 2004, Congress passed a law that limited 911 grants to states that were improperly diverting wireless tax revenue. The U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) has requested and received no response from New York State officials over the course of two investigations into the collection and use of funds for the 50 States and District of Columbia Wireless Enhanced 911 Services.

In 2012, Congress passed the Next Generation 911 Advancement Act, Public Law 112-96 (2012 Act), which dedicated \$115 million to support future matching grants to eligible states and U.S. territories for the implementation and operation of 911, E911, and NG911 services and applications, migration to IP-enabled emergency networks, and training public safety personnel involved in the 911 emergency response chain.

Section 6503 of the 2012 Act requires applicants seeking to receive grants under this program to certify that no portion of any designated 911 charges imposed by the state or other taxing jurisdiction within which the applicant is located are being obligated or expended “for any purpose other than the purposes for which such charges are designated or presented.”

We urge Congress to require NYS and the other six states that divert portions of 911 fees collected for non- 9-1-1 related purposes to provide the 911 emergency collections directly to the county controlled Public Safety Answering Points (PSAPs). PSAPs are centers where 9-1-1 calls are taken and emergency personnel are dispatched. From a PSAP, dispatchers for local police stations, sheriff's road patrol, EMS, State Troopers, Park Police and other agencies are dispatched to the location of the call, depending on the nature of the emergency.

The current hardware and software in many local 9-1-1 systems are reaching the end of their useful life and must be upgraded or replaced. In addition, Federal standards encourage states to build Next Generation 9-1-1 systems that have the capability to receive information from a variety of electronic devices in various forms. The cost of fully transitioning to Next Generation 9-1-1 could easily exceed \$10 billion over the coming years, and the current surcharge is not adequate to provide sufficient resources.