



**Red Rock Corridor Commission**  
**Thursday February 28, 2013**  
**4:00 p.m.**

**Cottage Grove City Hall, Council Chambers**  
**12800 Ravine Parkway South**  
**Cottage Grove, MN 55016**

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	<u>Action Requested</u>
1. Introductions	Information
2. Consent Items*	Approval
a. Minutes of the January 31, 2013 Meeting	
b. Checks and Claims	
3. Facebook Usage & Disclaimer Policy* - Andy Gitzlaff, WCRRA	Approval
4. AAU Update / Workshop Preview* - Ciara Schlichting, Stantec	Information
a. Transit Mode Overview	
b. MAP-21 Overview	
5. Legislative Update* – Josh Olson, RCRRA	Information
a. State	
b. Federal	
6. Other	Information
a. Next Scheduled Meeting – March 28, 2013	
7. Adjourn	Approval

**Immediately following the Commission meeting an approximately 1 hour workshop with the Commission on the Alternatives Analysis Update Study will be held**

\* *Enclosures*



## Draft Meeting Minutes

January 31, 2013  
Cottage Grove City Hall  
4:00 p.m.

Commission Members	Agency	Present
Mike Slavik	Dakota County RRA	X
Liz Workman	Dakota County RRA	
Autumn Lehrke, Chair	Washington County RRA	X
Janice Rettman	Ramsey County RRA	X
Jim McDonough	Ramsey County RRA	
Linda Higgins	Hennepin County RRA	
Barb Hollenbeck	City of Hastings	X
Jen Peterson, Vice Chair	City of Cottage Grove	X
Myron Bailey	City of Cottage Grove	
Keith Franke	City of St. Paul Park	
Steve Gallagher	City of Newport	X
Kathy Higgins	City of St. Paul Park	
Jim Keller	Denmark Township	X
Cam Gordon	City of Minneapolis	X
Amy Brendmoen	City of St. Paul	
Paul Hicks	City of Hastings	

Ex-Officio Members	Agency	
Ron Allen	Goodhue County	
Bob Kastner	City of Red Wing	
Marc Mogan	Prairie Island Indian Community	X
Ken Bjornstad	Goodhue County	X
Linda Gartner	Canadian Pacific Railway	
Judy Mitchell	Canadian Pacific Railway	

Staff	Agency	Present
Andy Gitzlaff	Washington County RRA	X
Josh Olson	Ramsey County RRA	X
Joe Morneau	Dakota County RRA	X
Lyssa Leitner	Washington County RRA	X
Mike Rogers	Ramsey County RRA	

<b>Others</b>	<b>Agency</b>
Katie White	Met Council
Carl Jensen	MNDOT
Tina Sanz	Hennepin County Aid to Commissioner Higgins
Ciara Schlichting	Stantec

The meeting was video recorded and can be viewed online at:  
[http://swctc.granicus.com/MediaPlayer.php?view\\_id=2&clip\\_id=4125](http://swctc.granicus.com/MediaPlayer.php?view_id=2&clip_id=4125)

Vice Chair Peterson called the meeting to order at 4:05 p.m.

**Agenda Item #1: Election of Officers**

Vice Chair Peterson opened nominations for Chair. Motion made by Rettman to nominate Lehrke. Motion made by Slavik to nominate Peterson.

A voice vote for the first nomination for Commissioner Lehrke was taken: Gitzlaff clarified that according to the bylaws County Members get 2 votes and Cities get 1 vote.

Gallagher-N (1 vote), Slavik- N (2 votes), Rettman-Y (2 votes), Peterson-N (1 vote), Lehrke-Y (2 votes), Keller-Y (1 vote) and Hollenbeck-Y (1 vote). Motion carried on voice vote 6-4 to elect Lehrke as Chair.

Chair Lehrke opened nominations for Vice Chair. Motion made by Hollenbeck to nominate Peterson. **Approved.** Motion carried.

Commission member Gordon joined the meeting at 4:15 p.m.

Roll call and introductions made by Commissioners Gallagher, Slavik, Rettman, Gordon, Peterson, Lehrke, Keller, and Hollenbeck.

**Agenda Item #2: Consent Items**

**a. Minutes of the November 29, 2012 Meeting**

**b. Checks and Claims**

Motion made by Rettman to approve the November 29, 2012 meeting minutes and checks and claims. Seconded by Gallagher. Rettman asked for clarification of when the contract for the website and other communication services runs from. Gitzlaff stated the contracts original end date was December 31<sup>st</sup>, but with additional money available it was extended through this month until the Commission decides what they would like to do for the upcoming year. Roll call vote: Gallagher, Slavik, Rettman, Gordon, Peterson, Lehrke, Keller, and Hollenbeck in favor. **Approved.** Motion carried.

**Agenda Item #3: Alternatives Analysis Update (AAU) Kick-off - Stantec**

Leitner discussed the AAU as presented in the packet. Rettman stated that she would like the reevaluation to include the river route being chosen as the preferred route for high speed rail as well as the opening of the Union Depot. Leitner stated that those two items will be added for the future as they are important for the Corridor.

Ciara Schlichting, Stantec, discussed the AAU as presented in the packet. Schlichting stated that there will be a workshop after the next meeting in February. There will be information presented on BRT as an educational opportunity. Most of the time will be spent on finding out what the Commissioners feel is important for the Corridor. Schlichting stated that the Project Management Team (PMT) had their first meeting this month. The PMT found strengths of the Corridor including the infrastructure that exists currently. The weaknesses include the geography which presents barriers to access the Corridor from the communities as well as lack of density along the Corridor to support the transit. Schlichting stated that they believe these are also opportunities.

Slavik asked how many members Stantec is looking for to participate on the Community Advisory Committee (CAC). Schlichting stated that they will not limit the number of members.

Rettman asked if communities will be asked for their input for the CAC. Schlichting stated that this would be a great idea to reach out to the communities. Rettman stated that she thinks the communities along the Corridor should be notified so they would be able to choose members for the CAC. Schlichting stated that they are not looking for specific appointments from each community, as it is not going to be a formal process. Peterson stated that the Park N Rides would be a good place to connect with people for the Committee. Rettman asked if there will be a limit of only ten to fifteen participants for the listening sessions. Schlichting stated that no one will be turned away; they will most likely be smaller intimate settings to allow for more detailed conversations.

Slavik stated that the Cedar BRT has been postponed and will start operating in 2013.

Gitzlaff stated that the PMT would like to have a Commission Member attend the CAC meetings.

Motion made by Hollenbeck to nominate Slavik to be the liaison between the CAC and the Red Rock Corridor Commission. Seconded by Peterson. **Approved.** Motion carried.

Gordon suggested that one of the listening groups be Transit for Livable Communities and that any suggestions for the listening groups should be sent to Gitzlaff. He also stated that if there are difficulties in getting participation from Hennepin County or Minneapolis, to let him know as he is willing to help recruit. Gordon asked if Leitner could give some examples of BRT in the area. Leitner stated there are not any BRT operations currently in the Twin Cities, but there are many in the nation and worldwide. The closest transit way to BRT is between the two campuses in Minneapolis and St. Paul. Leitner stated that Cedar Avenue will be the first as well as 35W which are two different versions of BRT. Leitner stated there are many forms of BRT and they will continually educate the public about this.

Lehrke stated that if there are ideas for groups that could host listening sessions, to let Gitzlaff know.

Rettman asked if ridership will be lost by having different modes along the way. Leitner stated that the transfers from different modes are reflected in the model for the ridership.. Rettman stated that Red Rock has so many potentials for employees and employers that the time transfers become critical. Gordon stated that when most AA's are done, economic development potential is not looked at. He asked if the economic development will be looked at or what the large impacts will be beside ridership and speed of travel. Leitner stated that Map-21 will guide this, but it is also still being looked at. Leitner stated that the evaluation piece will be a large factor and the Commission and community will help guide this with the goals as well as some of the broader items might not be included with Map-21. Gordon asked where they could learn more about Map-21. Leitner stated that at the February workshop, Map-21 will be looked at. Gallagher stated that MNDOT and the state are looking at Map-21 and it is being found to be less flexible and is dedicated to spending in certain areas. Rettman asked if they could get it ahead of time to read. Leitner stated that it is online, but there will be a presentation prepared for the February meeting. Gitzlaff stated that they can provide the Commission with more information if needed.

Leitner stated the meetings that are outlined are specific to this project and the consultant is needed to help with the engagement pieces. The staff is willing to attend any meetings that the Commission feels would be good opportunities to get more information out about the Corridor or the project specifically. Leitner asked the Commission to contact her or Gitzlaff with requests.

#### **Agenda Item #4: 2013 Communication Services - WCRRA**

##### **a. Website**

Gitzlaff discussed the website services as presented in the packet. Rettman asked if the contract is for six or twelve months. Gitzlaff stated this would be for twelve months and the contract could begin on February 1<sup>st</sup>, 2013 and would run into 2014 after budgets have been approved. Rettman stated that she would prefer to go ahead with option 2. Gitzlaff stated that it was not seen as an immediate need, but time is saved if the construction is done now. Peterson asked why the change from [www.redrockrail.org](http://www.redrockrail.org) to [redrockcorridor.com](http://redrockcorridor.com). Gitzlaff stated that both domains are owned along with two others. Staff have chosen to use [redrockcorridor.com](http://redrockcorridor.com) for consistency with the materials that are being sent out.

Motion made by Gordon to approve the staff recommendation. Seconded by Gallagher.  
**Approved.** Motion carried.

##### **b. Social Media**

Gitzlaff discussed social media as presented in the packet. Lehrke asked if Washington County will absorb the cost as well as have staff monitor and post on the site. Gitzlaff stated that one staff member will be assigned to the Facebook page. The staff member will commit time once every week or two. Gitzlaff stated that the Facebook page will complement the AAU study and use of staff resources. Lehrke stated that she feels this will help get information out in an effective way. Slavik asked how many hours per week

the staff member will dedicate to the Facebook page. Gitzlaff estimated one to two hours per week after the initial time of eight hours to create the Facebook page. Gitzlaff stated that in the two years of the Gateway Corridor Facebook page, there have not been any comments removed. Olson stated the Minnesota High-Speed Rail Commission has over 1,000 followers and the Union Depot has over 5,100 followers. The Facebook page for the Union Depot has been an effective tool for telling the story of the projects.

#### **Agenda Item #5: Legislative Update - RCRRA**

##### **a. State**

Olson discussed the State Legislative Update as presented in the packet. Olson stated the Red Rock Corridor was a recognized transit way within the Governor's budget.

##### **b. Federal**

Olson discussed the Federal Legislative Update as presented in the packet. Olson stated that more details for Map-21 and how it relates to New Starts or Small Starts projects going forward are being unveiled. Olson stated that Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood will be leaving Obama's Administration. Bill Shuster has also been confirmed to chair the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure. Shuster is a Congressman from Pennsylvania. Olson stated that there will be a new tone set in the House, specifically in transportation. Rettman asked if Red Rock will have a presence at next week's Transit on the Hill. Olson stated that usually there is representation by both CTIB and Met Council where information is provided that includes the Red Rock Corridor. Rettman stated the Commission should be notified of the event and the Commission may want to have a presence to make sure the Red Rock Corridor is represented. Peterson stated that she will be at the all-day event representing both Red Rock and High-Speed; she encouraged other Commission Members to attend. Rettman information about the Transit on the Hill could be sent out to the Commission. Olson will provide the information to the Commission.

#### **Agenda Item #6: Other**

##### **a. Next Meeting – Thursday, February 28, 2013**

Gitzlaff stated the regular meeting will be held and then a workshop will be held after the meeting. Rettman asked if the conference room here would be camera ready. Peterson stated that she does not think it is.

Motion made by Slavik to adjourn. Seconded by Gordon. **All in favor.** Motion carried.

Meeting adjourned at 5:21 p.m.



**DATE:** February 22, 2013  
**TO:** Red Rock Corridor Commission  
**FROM:** Staff  
**RE:** Checks and Claims

Attached is the

Hay Dobbs Website & Communication Services Invoice #6 (Dec 2012) \$ 147.05

Note: Percent of contract utilized = 73%

**TOTAL \$ 147.05**

*Detailed invoices can be made available upon request.*

**Action Requested:** Approval



**DATE:** February 21, 2013  
**TO:** Red Rock Corridor Commission  
**FROM:** Staff  
**RE:** Facebook Usage and Disclaimer Policy

**Background**

At the January Commission meeting staff was directed to develop a Facebook page for the Red Rock Corridor and prepare User and Disclaimer Policy for approval by the Commission.

The value of a Facebook page lies in its ability to communicate in a different way and about different items. Unlike a website, a Facebook page actively sends information out to those that “Like” the page. It does not require those people to come to the page to seek information. It also would allow the Commission to highlight/promote other related activities/events/media stories that are going on in the corridor.

With the start of the Alternatives Analysis Update (AAU) study now is a good time to start a facebook page. Creation of a Facebook page at this time allows the Commission to proactively include information about the Facebook page in all of its presentations and materials that it produces prior to public events. Also as more details from the AAU become public, it is anticipated that there will be media coverage and stories about the corridor and its activities. The Facebook page will allow the Commission to take advantage of that coverage.

Washington County staff will commit staff resources to create the page, upload content and monitor comments. Washington County successfully managed the Facebook page for the Gateway Corridor.

**Facebook Usage and Disclaimer Policy**

It is important that a Facebook Usage and Disclaimer Policy be created before the page goes live. Facebook, as a social media communications tool, can be used in multiple ways. It is important to determine the types of content, its frequency and level of interaction with the public when creating a Facebook page that captures the attention of Facebook users. Below is information about how the Facebook page can be utilized and structured.

What is the intent of the Facebook page?

For the purposes of this section, “intent” is meant to refer to “What does the Commission plan to use the Facebook page for?”

- To solely provide information about the Red Rock Corridor and not to generate comments or questions

- To provide information about the Red Rock Corridor in order to generate comments, questions and conversations

What content can be posted on the Facebook page?

Option 1: Corridor Commission Specific Information (i.e. only information that is directly related to the Red Rock Corridor)

- Links to media articles written about the corridor
- Links to new information posted on the Red Rock website
- Posting of information specifically related to activities of the Red Rock Corridor
- Photos from open houses or other Red Rock events

Option 2: Broader Corridor-Related Items (i.e. Information that is directly AND indirectly related to the Red Rock Corridor)

- Links to media articles that contain information about a new development near a potential Red Rock station along with a description that discusses its relevance (ex: Proposed development in a community that would be blocks away from possible transit stations on the Red Rock Corridor. An enhanced transit line would help spur new economic development.)
- Information about transit improvements in the corridor such as when Amtrak service begins at the Union Depot, bus route changes/additions along local routes, approval of new park and rides in the corridor
- Information about other transitway activities in the Region

What level of interaction is there with the public?

- Allow posting of comments/information directly to the Red Rock Facebook “Wall”
- Do not allow posting of comments/information directly to the Red Rock Facebook “Wall”
- Comments to information/links posted by staff on the Red Rock “Wall”
  - Staff does not respond to any comments or questions
    - Individuals would be able to post comments on items that are posted on the “Wall.” However, staff would not directly respond to any comments/questions.
  - Staff responds with the appropriate level of feedback
    - Staff will answer questions if they are asked; however, not every comment will be responded to.
    - Staff will correct information if a comment is posted and it contains incorrect information (ex: a comment is made about a station at Johnson Parkway, staff would respond that there is no station at Johnson Parkway but one at Earl Street)
    - Staff will post comments in response to public comments when appropriate (ex: a comment is made that someone attended an open house and enjoyed the presentation. Staff would respond with ‘Thanks for attending! Let us know if you have any questions that didn’t get answered.’)

Recommendations:

The value of social platforms, like Facebook, is they allow organizations to interact with and engage key audiences. Because the Red Rock Corridor website is already used to disseminate information, we recommend using Facebook as an opportunity to further interact with the public. Therefore, the intent of the Facebook page would be to generate comments, questions and conversations with followers of the page.

To ensure the commission provides information of value to followers, we recommend providing information that puts the Red Rock Corridor in a larger context, by posting information that is directly and indirectly related to the corridor. This will attract an audience that is interested in issues in the east metro, but may not have thought that the Red Rock Corridor is relevant to them. Posting a variety of information also gives the public more opportunities to continue to visit the page.

While providing information of value is the most important way to engage audiences and to maintain and grow the number of followers, it is necessary that the Commission frequently posts new content to the page. Therefore, it is recommended that the commission post new content on a weekly basis.

Finally, in order to ensure the Facebook page is used to interact with the public, comments should be allowed on the page. Staff should be prepared to respond to posts with the appropriate level of feedback to encourage followers to continue to ask questions and provide feedback on the page. By frequently providing information of value and consistently responding to comments on the page, the Commission will be able to foster an online community that has a vested interest in new transit in the east metro.

Once the intent of the Facebook page is established and the page is live, the website and all Red Rock Corridor communications will include the Facebook 'button.' This will be a way to let people know that the page exists and will lead them directly to the page if it is clicked on.



## **The Red Rock Corridor Facebook Disclaimer**

*To be posted on the 'notes' section of the Facebook Page*

The following is a draft disclaimer policy that will be posted in the 'notes' section of the Facebook page. The intent of this disclaimer is to establish guidelines that will be used to delete inappropriate comments and what the Red Rock Corridor Commission is intending to do with the information posted on the page.

### **Disclaimer**

*The Red Rock Corridor Commission reserves the right, at our sole discretion, to change, modify, add, or delete comments or posts, photos, videos, or the entire site at any time, without notice or warning.*

*In general, it is the Commission's intent to allow comments to be posted on its social media pages. In the instances where comments are allowed, the commission will use the following guidelines when deciding to edit/remove a post:*

- 1. Obscenities*
- 2. Comment demeaning other people*
- 3. Comment that is libelous/slanderous*
- 4. Inaccuracies*
- 5. Comments not related to the specific content of the site*
- 6. Comments on elections*
- 7. Solicitations of commerce*
- 8. Sexual content or links to sexual content*
- 9. Identified as a SPAM message*
- 10. Supports or opposes any political campaign, issue or ballot measure*
- 11. Encourages illegal activity*

*It should be noted that:*

- The Commission has the right to reproduce any pictures or videos posted to this site in any of its publications or websites or any other media outlets.*
- The Commission has the right to quote any comments or suggestions left by users.*
- The views, postings, positions, or opinions expressed on the site do not necessarily reflect those of the Commission.*
- The Red Rock Corridor Commission does not endorse any product, service, company or organization advertising on any of the websites with which it chooses to engage. The ads that appear on the websites are sold, posted and maintained by the individual corporations that host the pages.*

### **Action Requested**

Approval of Usage and Disclaimer Policy for the Red Rock Corridor Facebook page.



**DATE:** February 21, 2013  
**TO:** Red Rock Corridor Commission  
**FROM:** Staff  
**RE:** Red Rock Corridor Alternatives Analysis Update

Work began on the Alternatives Analysis Update (AAU) in early January. Below are the three phases of the study:

1. Reviewing previous work and reassessing the vision and goals for the Corridor
2. Alternatives development, analysis and evaluation
3. Implementation Plan

The project is currently in the first phase.

At the Commission meeting a presentation will be given on bus rapid transit (BRT) and commuter rail in regards to their service characteristics and how the two modes differ from one another. Information will also be provided about the new federal transportation bill, MAP-21, and its potential implications for the Red Rock Corridor. After the Commission meeting, an interactive workshop will be held with Commission members to gain feedback on the transit needs in each community and corridor-wide.

The Community Advisory Committee (CAC) has been formed and the project team is working on a final list of members. The first CAC meeting will be held in early March. The CACs main objective will be to provide input at project milestones and help staff improve outreach efforts and ensure that all project materials are easily understandable by the public. Three CAC meetings will be held over the duration of this project. Commissioner Slavik is the Commission's appointed representative to the CAC but all members are encouraged to attend the CAC meetings.

A public workshop will be held in March (tentative date is Thursday, March 21<sup>st</sup>) that will focus on providing general information about the Corridor and the AAU and collect feedback about the vision and transit needs for the Corridor. The project team is also working to set up small group listening sessions throughout the Corridor. Finally, a survey will be developed and distributed online through a link in an e-news and in advertisements for the public workshop. From experience, it is sometimes difficult for people to attend meetings in person and the survey will help to collect additional feedback from those people who would like their voices heard but cannot attend.

**Action**  
Information



## Weekly Update for Week of February 11th

By the Numbers: The new sequestration deadline just 14 days away, DOT funding runs out in 41 days, Passenger rail policy runs out in 228 days, surface transportation policy in 598 days and FAA policy in 960 days. The mid-term elections are in 629 days.

## In this Update

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## President Obama Gives State of the Union Speech

This week, President Obama stood in front of Members of Congress, Members of the Supreme Court and Members of his Cabinet to give his fifth State of the Union Address. The President addressed a broad range of issues including voting rights, education, climate change, Medicare, immigration, gun control and transportation.

Having largely neglected mention of economic issues during his inaugural address last month, the President took this opportunity to focus on a plan he has laid out to strengthen the middle class, thereby creating economic growth and jobs. Specifically, President Obama announced the launch of additional manufacturing hubs established to work with Department of Defense and Energy to revitalize areas around the country that have been hurt by effects of globalization. Additionally, the

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President called on lawmakers to raise the federal minimum wage to \$9 an hour, citing the fact the growing numbers of people living in poverty in one of the wealthiest countries in the world.

The president also indicated that he will seek additional revenues to offset the deficit - whether these revenues will come in the form of tax increases is still unclear. However, he did mention that a great deal of revenue will soon be freed up by the withdrawal of American troops from Afghanistan.

He also showed his continued support for improving transportation infrastructure through high speed rail and other like projects. Obama claimed that such infrastructure improvements are vital to maintaining America's global competitiveness and creating jobs. Details on how projects will be funded were not part of the President's speech. The president described his "Partnership to Rebuild America" plan as a design to attract private capital so taxpayers don't shoulder the full burden. Specific details on the plan are slim, but experts speculate that it will involve some form of infrastructure bank that can loan funds to upgrade roads, trains, pipelines, power grids, and other failing infrastructure. Yet, the president did make one clear transportation policy proposal; he wants \$50 billion dollars to spend on transportation infrastructure with \$40 billion going towards repairs and \$10 billion going toward new projects. President Obama also suggested his advocacy of clean energy and clean transportation will be reflected in the Administration's infrastructure plans.

The President also briefly reaffirmed his commitment to improving the country's health care system and strengthening the foundations of our Medicare and social security systems. He sought to show his commitment to health care by giving strong Affordable Care Act advocates Oregon Gov. John Kitzhaber who is a former emergency room doctor and Abby Schanfield of Minnesota, a patient with a lifelong chronic illness, seats of honor for the State of the Union Address.

The President took this opportunity to reaffirm his pro-gun control stance and show his support for the gun control legislation in congress, particularly the assault weapons ban.

In his speech, President Obama did not repeat his 2009 plea for bipartisanship. He has indicated his priorities and he intends to pursue them regardless of whatever or not the GOP offers its support. It remains to be seen how this new, much more partisan, stance will affect Obama's ability to meet the goals he outlined in this speech.

## **House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee Emphasizes Federal Role**

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This week, the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee held its first hearing of the 113<sup>th</sup> Congress with new leadership and members including the new Chairman, Congressman Bill Shuster (R-PA) and **Congressman Rick Nolan** from Minnesota's 8th Congressional District who was elected in 2012 and chosen to serve on the T&I Committee in January. Nolan joins fellow Minnesotan, **Congressman Tim Walz** on the Transportation & Infrastructure Committee.

The Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure's first hearing of the 113th Congress emphasized the importance of transportation and infrastructure to the U.S. economy and examined the role of the federal government in ensuring safe, efficient, and reliable infrastructure. With a major focus on the state of transportation in this country, Chairman Bill Shuster did not hesitate to call on the federal government's role in improving transportation and infrastructure in the future: "An efficient national transportation network lowers production costs and enhances productivity and profits. And it is about America... Working together in the 113th Congress, the Committee will focus on strengthening America's national transportation network... This is an important responsibility of government - especially the Federal government."

Three witnesses including former Pennsylvania Governor Edward G. Rendell who is now the Co-Chair of Building America's Future, Thomas J. Donohue, U.S. Chamber of Commerce President and CEO, and Terry O'Sullivan who is the current General President of Laborers' International Union of North America testified at the Committee hearing. Representing business and labor, these three witnesses underscored the critical role of the Federal government and stressed the importance of transportation in growing this country's economy. Noting that increased national transportation makes for a more economically efficient country, U.S. Chamber of Commerce President and CEO Thomas J. Donohue explained in the hearing the dependency of American jobs on transportation saying "Markets outside of our borders represent 80% of the world's purchasing power, 92% of its economic growth, and 95% of its consumers. They are accessed through transportation networks. More than 38 million American jobs depend on trade." The hearing stressed the importance of Transportation and Infrastructure as a pertinent role in strengthening the economy over the next term, and concluded by stressing the nature of the topic is not partisan, as Laborers' International Union of North

American General President Terry O'Sullivan said it, "This isn't a Republican issue or a Democratic issue. There isn't a single American who doesn't benefit from and doesn't want good roads and safe bridges, clean drinking water and efficient airports, waterways, abundant energy and good jobs."

Prior to the Committee hearing, Chairman Bill Shuster told sources the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee will not be drafting a new transportation bill until later this year, as the focus in the coming months will be holding oversight hearing on MAP-21 implementation, which was the transportation bill passed last year. Other things on the T&I agenda include Amtrak reauthorization and Water Resources Development Act legislation.

### **House Ag Committee Looks at Sequestration**

- The House Agriculture Committee has plans to address the rural economy in the 113<sup>th</sup> Congress, but with talks of sequestration, the focus of upcoming years will likely be the potential furloughs of meat inspectors. Last week, the Agriculture Department announced all Food Safety and Inspection Service personnel could be furloughed up to 15 days if the sequester goes into effect on March 1<sup>st</sup>. This would prohibit meatpackers and other meat and egg production facilities from operating, as federal law requires an inspector to be present.

Sources have warned the impacts of this could be severe throughout the country. Ag Committee Chairman, Frank Lucas (R-OK) and **Ranking Ag Committee Member Collin Peterson (D-MN07)** warned these cuts and furloughs are unprecedented, because in previous years meat inspectors stayed on the job. From the meatpacking industry to the consumer, the impact will be felt if Congress cannot reach a deal.

On the Senate side, Senator Debbie Stabenow (D-MI), who chairs the Ag Committee, has worked with her Democratic colleagues in the Senate to put forward a bill that would end yearly fixed direct payments made to farmer and land owners based on the past production history of cropland, which would produce over \$25 billion in savings and if passed, not force inspectors to be furloughed.

### **Senate and House Discuss Plans to Avoid Sequestration**

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The Senate came out with more details this week on their plan to replace sequester with both revenue and spending cuts. The \$110 billion plan laid out by Senator Majority Leader Harry Reid on Thursday includes higher taxes on the wealthy, tax revenue from oil that has been derived from tar sands and reduction in agriculture subsidies and defense.

This all comes as part of Congress's plan to avoid the \$85 billion in across the board spending cuts that are scheduled to take effect March 1<sup>st</sup>. The White House voiced their support for the Senate plan and then called on House Republicans to make a move on avoiding the sequestration cuts.

House Speaker John Boehner said this week responded to developments in the Senate by stating his willingness to work with their friends in the Senate to address the problem, but emphasizing any plan will have include a budget balancing plan for next 10 years.

Members of the House and Senate will likely continue to look at ways the two sides can find a solution and avoid the devastating sequestration cuts. While Republicans in the Senate have voiced their opposition, it is clear that House Speaker John Boehner is willing to find ways to address the problem that will include a long term solution.

### **KEY UPCOMING DATES**

#### **Late February/Early March**

The President is expected to submit his annual budget proposal to Congress. Delays in the budget process are a result of changes in budgeting numbers because of the fiscal cliff deal that was passed at the beginning of January.

#### **March 1, 2013**

Spending reductions mandated by the Budget Control Act, collectively known as sequestration, are scheduled to take effect. Postponement was decided in fiscal cliff deal which passed the House on January 1, 2013.

#### **March 27, 2013**

The current continuing appropriations law expires.

#### **April 15, 2013**

House and Senate are required to adopt a budget resolution for FY2014. If legislators fail to meet deadline, their pay will be put into escrow beginning April 16th.

### **May 19, 2013**

Three-month suspension of the debt-ceiling expires, meaning the U.S. risks breaching the debt limit unless Congress acts again.

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## **SPECIAL NEWS, NOTES AND EVENTS**

### **Minnesota State Society Annual Walleye Dinner**

*Wednesday, February 20<sup>th</sup>, 6 PM*

Marriott Metro Center

Washington, D.C.

RSVP Emily Tranter 202/544-9896

### **Salute Minnesota Counties Reception**

*Saturday, March 2<sup>nd</sup>, 4:30-6:30PM*

Home of Dennis McGrann

150 North Carolina Ave SE, Washington, DC

### **Reception Honoring Congressman Rick Nolan**

*Tuesday, March 5<sup>th</sup>, 5:30-7:30PM*

Home of Dennis McGrann

150 North Carolina Ave SE, Washington, DC

### **Celebrate Minnesota Cities Reception**

*Monday, March 11, 5-7 PM*

Rayburn House Office Building Room B-354

Washington, DC

## **MINNESOTA DELEGATION NOTES**

Senator **Amy Klobuchar (D-MN)** is named chair of Joint Economic Committee. [Read more.](#)

Senator **Al Franken (D-MN)** introduces legislation to promote Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) Education.

[Read more.](#)

Congressman **Tim Walz (D-MN-01)** teams up with colleagues Loeb sack and Jordan to introduce resolution opposing Olympic decision to drop wrestling. [Read more.](#)

Congressman **John Kline (R-MN-02)** reviews President

Obama's State of the Union Address on Hartman Show. [Read and listen here.](#)

**Congressman Erik Paulsen (D-MN-03)** is appointed to serve on the Joint Economic Committee, joining fellow Minnesota, Senator Amy Klobuchar. [Read more](#)

**Congresswoman McCollum (D-MN-04)** chooses National Congress of American Indians President Jefferson Keel as special guest for President Obama's State of the Union Address. [Read more.](#)

**Congressman Keith Ellison (D-MN-05)** applauds President Obama's call for Universal Pre-K. [Read more.](#)

**Congresswoman Michele Bachmann (R-MN-06)** on President Obama's State of the Union address: "we heard more of the same calls for bigger government-and smaller citizens-from President Obama." [Read more.](#)

**Congressman Collin Peterson (D-MN-07)** on President Obama's gun proposal: "There are some good ideas, some bad ideas, and some new ideas." [Read more.](#)

**Congressman Rick Nolan (D-MN-08)** calls for campaign-finance reform constitutional amendment. [Read more.](#)

### **ADDITIONAL MEDIA**

#### **Appropriators Begin Canvassing Agencies on Special Spending Needs**

February 15, 2013  
By Kerry Young, CQ Roll Call

House appropriators are gathering information about which federal agencies and programs may need special provisions in a new six-month stopgap funding measure, even as they try to ensure that any proposal to extend government operations this year sticks closely to the blueprint of the current bare-bones continuing resolution.

House Appropriations Chairman Harold Rogers, R-Ky., on Wednesday said he was working on a package to wrap up overdue fiscal 2013 spending laws, a combination of new Defense and Military Construction-Veterans Affairs bills and then a continuing resolution to fund most of the rest of the government.

CRs in general merely extend the date on appropriations laws, but exceptions, known as anomalies, are routinely made to address urgent needs. The current CR, which expires March 27,

was cleared last year with a limited number of such items, and Rogers says he will try to limit any changes in spending authority that could complicate the measure's movement through Congress.

"We've got the staff on all of the subcommittees pinging the departments and agencies and the like to find out the most important ones," Rogers said. "We won't do many anomalies. I am going to insist that we keep those to a bare minimum."

Roger's fiscal 2013 wrap-up package, which could be unveiled by the end of the month, would hew to the existing law and cap on the operating expenses of the federal government. It would reflect the \$1.043 trillion level for discretionary spending set in the January debt-limit deal (PL 113-3). If Congress doesn't act to stop the sequester due to begin hitting federal budgets on March 1, the discretionary spending cap in the CR would fall to around \$974 billion.

It wouldn't provide new money for the military and veterans but instead would move around money within these bills, \$518 billion for Defense and \$72 billion for Military Construction-VA.

Rogers' plan means that military and veterans programs would get fresh orders from Congress on using their available dollars, aiding them if the sequester hits, but also improving their operations if these slated cuts are somehow avoided.

That may raise hurdles to easy passage for the bill, however, because the rest of the federal government still would be adhering through September 2013 to spending directions that were set in the fiscal 2012 appropriations law (PL 112-55, PL 112-74), which were enacted in November and December 2011. Democrats have opposed efforts by Republicans to grant the Pentagon flexibility to soften the impact of the sequester that are not given to the rest of the government.

It's still unclear when and if the House would act on Rogers' bill, but such an approach appears to have raised some concerns for his Senate counterpart, Barbara A. Mikulski, D-Maryland. James M. Inhofe of Oklahoma, the ranking Republican on the Senate Armed Services Committee, earlier had suggested cutting the size of the federal workforce broadly through attrition to offset the scheduled \$85 billion sequester. He also seeks in the bill to provide the Pentagon with greater authority to allocate funding under the current continuing resolution (PL 112-175).

Mikulski said she opposes such an approach, and is seeking instead to make sure all federal agencies get either fresh directions on how to divvy up their available money through an omnibus package of fiscal 2013 spending bills, or at least to get

them more flexibility in a CR.

"We also want to deal with the issue of the CR versus the omnibus. We don't want a government shutdown," she said. "We're working with our House counterparts on this."

While leaders in both chambers remain locked in highly partisan budget battles, the appropriators in both chambers and parties insist they are committed to trying to return to a less chaotic approach to funding the government. Rogers and Nita M. Lowey of New York, the ranking Democrat on the House Appropriations Committee, are aligned with Mikulski and her GOP ranking member, Richard C. Shelby of Alabama, in a drive to get more spending bills to the floor this year.

Last year, Rogers' committee approved 11 of its dozen bills, and the House passed seven of them. Senate appropriators also approved 11 of their bills, but Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, D-Nev., brought none of them to the floor.

Mikulski on Thursday outlined her plans for the year. She said she expects the subcommittees to start hearings "swiftly and smartly" after President Barack Obama releases his fiscal 2014 request.

"This committee, though the administration is late in submitting its budget to us, is going to meet its timeline of holding hearings and being ready for markup in late spring and on the floor this summer," she said. "We are, in this committee, going to make every effort to have a regular order and follow the traditions of clock and calendar to do that."

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