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September 2015 Monthly Report for MTC

To: Steve Heminger, Executive Director
From: Tom Bulger, President, GRI
Re: Monthly Report for September 2015
Date: September 29, 2015

- **Congress Back in Session**
- **Papal Visit**
- **House Speaker John Boehner Resigns**
- **No Government Shutdown**
- **House Transportation Authorization Bill Update**
- **California Public Employees' Pension Reform Act (PEPRA) Meeting with the Secretary of Labor**
- **Meetings**

Congress Back in Session

The Congress returned to Washington, DC on September 8, after a six-week vacation.

Papal Visit

Pope Francis visited Washington, DC the week of September 20. My personal highlight of the Pope's time in Washington, DC was the first papal address to the Congress. He implored America to accept those born in other countries, urging lawmakers to set aside political differences and embrace people who search for a better life. He saved his most specific prescription for combating climate change, a cause he said the United States has a special obligation to lead. In New York City on September 24, Mayors and Regional leaders from around the world welcomed Pope Francis by signing a pledge to drastically cut carbon pollution. California Governor Jerry Brown (D) helped launch the movement.

House Speaker John Boehner Resigns

Shortly after the Pope's visit, Speaker John Boehner abruptly announced his retirement effective the end of October 2015. Speaker Boehner had worked for over twenty years to have the last three Pope's address Congress; his wish came true last week. The latest contender for House Speaker is Rep. Kevin McCarthy (R-Calif.) who announced his bid for Speaker on September 28.

No Government Shutdown

The likelihood of a Government shutdown has past. Congress appears to be on a path to passing legislation to avert a government shutdown later this week. Conservatives eager for a funding fight have set December as the best time to confront President Obama on spending and abortion.

The Senate is poised to enact funding at current levels through December 11. If the House agrees on September 30, that will avert a shutdown on October 1.

House Transportation Authorization Bill Update

House Transportation and Infrastructure Chairman Bill Shuster (R-Pa.) insisted last week that he would produce a surface transportation bill. No bill has been produced as of this report. The Senate Environment and Public Committee senior staff told me that the House has dropped their repatriation of offshore corporate profits. Instead, the House is looking at the Senate's passed authorization bill that has three years of funding and six years of program authorizations.

California Public Employees' Pension Reform Act (PEPRA) **Meeting with the Secretary of Labor**

In September, we organized a meeting with the Secretary of Labor through Rep. Mark DeSaulnier (D-Calif.). I would characterize the outcome of this meeting as both sides can claim

victory. The Department of Labor (DOL) insists that they have approved over 87% of California's Federal Transit Administration grants notwithstanding DOL's objections that the terms and conditions PEPPRA effect collective bargaining rights under 13(c) of 49 US Code.

Meetings

- Meeting with the National Association of Regional Council's concerning the sub allocation of Surface Transportation Program (STP) Federal Highway funding to Metropolitan Areas.
- Meetings with the US Conference of Mayors on STP sub allocation.
- Meetings with Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority staff concerning their fare payment pilot program regarding Clipper®.