

November 14, 2008

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Majority Leader Reid, Chairman Oberstar, Ranking Member Mica, Chairman Boxer and Ranking Member Inhofe:

The National Association of Regional Councils (NARC) supports your efforts to include infrastructure spending as an important component of a second economic stimulus package. We appreciate the opportunity to have San Diego Association of Governments Executive Director Gary Gallegos represent the regional perspective by testifying before the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure "Investing in Infrastructure: The Road to Recovery" hearing, on October 29, 2008. We commend your dedication and leadership on this important issue.

NARC, representing regional Councils of Government (COGs), Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs), serves as the national voice for regionalism – advocating regional cooperation as the most effective way to address a variety of community planning, development and infrastructure issues. These regional agencies and their governing boards of appointed and local elected officials are knowledgeable about infrastructure issues that cut across city, county and, often, state boundaries, and have expertise in regional infrastructure financing, planning and development, and implementing new, emerging technologies and strategies to determine appropriate infrastructure investments.

COGs and MPOs are responsible for billions of dollars in transportation, air quality and wastewater planning and programming each year and, in fact, can create thousand of jobs in their regions through infrastructure development. For every \$1 billion spent on infrastructure there is a correlation of over 40,000 jobs created. This stimulus package can put hundreds of thousands of people to work and ensure needed safety, preservation, and capacity projects are completed.

NARC respectfully submits the following recommendations on how to effectively and efficiently invest infrastructure funds in the next stimulus, if passed. NARC will be submitting, under separate cover, information supplied by a representative sample of MPOs and COGs regarding the current investment needs and potential that exists on the regional level.

- ***To ensure the most viable projects are acted upon, NARC asks that local governments continue to be considered through an aggressive consultation process.*** Past transportation authorizations have strengthened the process by which local governments are consulted on transportation and infrastructure projects. This advancement should not be reversed and states receiving this funding should consult on transportation infrastructure projects with their constituent MPOs and with non-metropolitan local elected officials. The precedent set in the House passed stimulus (H.R. 7110) earlier this year reverses these important advancements, eliminating the voice of local elected officials in this process who are acting through their regional planning organizations. Maintaining this layered, integrated consultative process ensures that regionally beneficial "ready-to-go" projects do not languish.
- ***Transportation projects funded with money from the stimulus bill should be given priority if taken from an approved metropolitan Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) or State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP).*** Projects vetted and included on approved programs have a high degree of visibility and accountability, and ensure the needs of communities are met. Especially in cases outside of metropolitan areas, the states should consult with rural and non-metropolitan local elected officials on economically beneficial projects which may be adopted from the STIP.

- ***In order to maintain visibility and accountability, NARC welcomes the opportunity to directly communicate to Congress the progress made on the regional level with federal stimulus funding.*** This will further demonstrate the benefits of consultation and oversight as critical elements in preserving the public's trust and the critical role infrastructure investment plays within communities to bolster economic development opportunities.

NARC appreciates your commitment to making sustained and strategic public investments in infrastructure. We offer our assistance for communicating ready-to-go infrastructure projects in the second stimulus package to stimulate jobs, reinvigorate local and national economies and possibly forestall deep problems within state and local governments.

Thank you for your consideration of our recommendations. Please do not hesitate to contact Fred Abousleman, executive director of NARC, at 202.986.1032 or fred@narc.org for further information or assistance.

Sincerely,



Betty Knight
President, National Association of Regional Councils
Presiding Commissioner, Platte County, Missouri