



November 18, 2015

The Honorable Bill Shuster
Chairman
Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
United States House of Representatives
2251 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Peter DeFazio
Ranking Member
Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
United States House of Representatives
2163 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable James Inhofe
Chairman
Committee on Environment and Public Works
United States Senate
410 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Barbara Boxer
Ranking Member
Committee on Environment and Public Works
United States Senate
456 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairmen Shuster and Inhofe, and Ranking Members DeFazio and Boxer:

As you work to develop a conference committee agreement on a multi-year transportation reauthorization, we are writing as leaders of the national organizations representing local elected officials and regional transportation officials to urge your continued attention to local governments and their surface transportation infrastructure needs.

Specifically, we urge you to include the following provisions, drawn upon both the House STRR Act and Senate DRIVE Act, which seek to better emphasize local decision-makers in the reauthorization process. We ask for these substantive provisions to further support cities and counties (with their metro regions and local areas) as owners and operators of much of the nation’s surface transportation infrastructure, including a substantial portion of the Federal-aid highway system.

Surface Transportation Program (STP): Our top priority is increased STP funding to support local decision-makers. STP represents the only source of federal funds to support local efforts to maintain and improve surface transportation networks. In MAP-21, the share of STP funds suballocated by population was reduced substantially, from 62.5 percent of available funds to 50 percent. We have made restoration of STP local funding our top priority for this reauthorization, urging actions that move us toward the pre-MAP-21 commitment levels. As such, we urge the following:

- Increase the STP local share to 55 percent starting in year one of the authorization;
- Increase the STP local share above 55 percent if the Neugebauer amendment (H. Amdt. 824) or other mechanisms increase the authorization’s annual funding levels;
- Increase STP’s underlying funding level so more funds are available for distribution to local areas; and
- Do not add any additional “off the top” allocations of STP funding to underwrite other priorities. The 55 percent (or higher) local share must be of 100 percent of the program.

Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP): TAP funds represent a modest but powerful resource to advance innovation and promote better network connectivity. We urge adoption of the following:

- Allocate 100 percent of TAP program to local areas, allowing local areas increased flexibility in the use of these funds; and
- Ensure that TAP funds are made available like other STP funds allocated to local areas by including proportional obligation authority.



Locally-Owned Bridges: Bridge repair, rehabilitation, and replacement are top priorities for federal-aid for counties and cities.

- Preserve the off-system bridge set-aside as in current law; and
- Make on-system bridges not on the National Highway System eligible for funding under the National Highway Performance Program.

Metropolitan Planning: The planning process is an essential component of the federal transportation program that ensures funds are spent efficiently on projects that are the highest priority for local areas.

- Increase metropolitan planning funding for MPOs to the highest possible level; and
- Preserve identical House and Senate language on transit representation, allowing local elected officials to continue to represent transit agencies on MPO boards.

Cumulatively, we believe these recommendations will better support local decision-makers as they work to improve the effectiveness of our shared federal program and bring greater benefits to the users of our nation’s transportation system.

We commend you for your commitment to enacting a long-term reauthorization bill, and our organizations stand ready to help move this critical legislation forward.

Sincerely,



Council Member Elaine Clegg
City of Boise, ID

Vice President, Association of
Metropolitan Planning Organizations



Commissioner Sallie Clark
El Paso County, CO

President, National Association
of Counties



Executive Director Jeffrey G. Kiely
Northwest New Mexico COG

President, National Association of
Development Organizations



Judge Byron Ryder
Leon County, TX

President, National Association
of Regional Councils



Councilmember Melodee Colbert-Kean
City of Joplin, MO

President, National League
of Cities



Mayor Stephanie Rawlings-Blake
City of Baltimore, MD

President, The United States Conference
of Mayors