



July 15, 2015

Chairman John Thune  
Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and  
Transportation  
511 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Ranking Member Bill Nelson  
Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and  
Transportation  
716 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Thune and Ranking Member Nelson:

On behalf of the local government community and its elected and appointed transportation officials, we thank you for your leadership as you work toward developing a long-term reauthorization of the nation's transportation programs. Our organizations are united in a desire to see Congress pass a multi-year bill that increases funding and directs additional resources to our communities.

An important source of transportation infrastructure funds for our members is the TIGER Discretionary Grant Program. Since its inception, the TIGER Program has distributed, on a competitive basis, \$4.1 billion for more than 300 projects across the nation in communities of all sizes. The popularity of the program is evident in the fact that each round of TIGER funding attracts applications requesting far more dollars than the program can support; to date, applications have totaled more than \$120 billion, thirty-times higher than available funding. Given the program's importance to our members and its popularity generally, we appreciate the inclusion of "freight investment grants" – a TIGER-like program – in the *Comprehensive Transportation and Consumer Protection Act of 2015*.

In our view, the bill would be significantly improved with the following recommendations:

First, the TIGER program must remain multi-modal in scope to ensure its ongoing success. Our organizations firmly believe that efficient freight movement is essential for the growth and expansion of national, regional, and local economies, and our members play an important role in ensuring that freight flows through metropolitan areas. The TIGER program has successfully funded vital freight projects that *often cross modes* and therefore would have been difficult – if not impossible – to fund through other federal programs. Inclusion of TIGER in the next transportation authorization is critical, and we look forward to working with you and your colleagues in both chambers to ensure robust funding for a multi-modal TIGER program.

Second, any TIGER or TIGER-like discretionary program should explicitly make MPOs and regional councils eligible for grant funding. We commend you for including local governments as eligible recipients for this program. However, for certain communities, the metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs) and regional councils serve in the same capacity as local governments under this program, and are also essential partners with the federal government in the development of the nation's transportation system. In addition, we urge that consistency with long-range plans prepared by applicable MPOs be added to the list of project selection criteria.



In closing, we applaud your leadership on these issues, and stand ready to work with you to develop legislation that will help improve the nation's transportation system while strengthening the national economy and the economies of the nation's local governments and regions. Our members are prepared to assist your efforts to make a long-term, well-funded transportation reauthorization a reality, and to develop a TIGER program that will best serve the needs of all system users.

Sincerely,



DeLania Hardy  
Executive Director  
Association of Metropolitan  
Planning Organizations



Joe McKinney  
Executive Director  
National Association  
of Development Organizations



Joanna L. Turner  
Executive Director  
National Association  
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Clarence E. Anthony  
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Tom Cochran  
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