



July 12, 2021

Dear Senator:

The Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations (AMPO), National Association of Development Organizations (NADO), and National Association of Regional Councils (NARC), national membership organizations which represent regional and metropolitan planning organizations from across the country, applaud the recent bipartisan framework agreement and the inclusion of surface transportation reauthorization and other locally important policy provisions. This represents an important step toward providing significant investments in America's infrastructure.

To ensure the most effective use of the federal funds provided as a result of the bipartisan framework, we recommend the following:

1. **Provide a proportional share of the agreed-upon funding increases for local needs, including strategic planning.** The announced framework increases funding for roads and transit compared to the Senate and House reauthorization bills and we request a commensurate and proportional increase in funding for the metropolitan planning (PL) program, Surface Transportation Block Grant (STBG) Program, Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP), and Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) Program. This will provide local governments additional, direct resources to meet their infrastructure challenges in an equitable, resilient, and climate-focused manner, and ensure that the projects these funds support are vetted and prioritized to maximize their long-term benefit locally and nationally. **Additional PL<sup>1</sup>, STBG<sup>2</sup>, TAP<sup>3</sup>, and CMAQ<sup>4</sup> funds provided as a result of the bipartisan agreement should be at 100 percent federal share.** This could be accomplished by allowing the use of previously provided federal support for COVID recovery or other federal funds to be used as local match.
2. **Set aside a portion of funds provided to all policy areas in the framework for strategic planning and public engagement with regional and metropolitan planning organizations as eligible recipients of and applicants for these funds.** Regional and metropolitan planning organizations have extensive track records of success planning for and coordinating the expenditure of federal funds for many of the policy areas outlined in the bipartisan framework, including in transportation, broadband, water and wastewater, EV charging, housing, and resilience. Not every regional organization works on all of these, but where they do, they have the expertise, relationships, and credibility to be vital partners in planning for and expending

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<sup>1</sup> PL (23 U.S.C. § 134; 49 U.S.C. § 5303) funds support metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs), which work with states, municipal and county governments, private interests, and the public across a region to plan for and prioritize the expenditure of federal transportation funds.

<sup>2</sup> STBG (23 U.S.C. § 133) funds, the majority of which are distributed (suballocated) for local use, are highly flexible and used to address equity, mobility, air quality, climate impacts, and resiliency and other community challenges like housing and economic development.

<sup>3</sup> TAP (23 U.S.C. § 133) supports non-driving options that reduce congestion and emissions and improve public health.

<sup>4</sup> CMAQ (23 U.S.C. § 149) funds are used locally to reduce emissions of harmful pollutants, including carbon.

these funds and can provide technical assistance to ensure that communities of all sizes are positioned to compete for funds under the broader infrastructure package.

Regional and metropolitan planning organizations have deep roots in their communities and bring together local elected officials, public agencies, private interests, and the public to conduct strategic decision-making and ensure the efficient and effective deployment of federal funds. The performance-based planning process these organizations undertake helps ensure the broad coordination of federal expenditures is targeted to meet national, regional, and local goals.

An infrastructure package that reflects the needs of the nation's regions and local and county governments – including by ensuring that projects are consistent with existing planning requirements – will be a vital step toward ensuring this legislation has maximum impact on the many policy areas it seeks to address.

As you continue to progress toward an infrastructure agreement, our organizations stand ready to work with you to ensure that the important goals this legislation is designed to meet are achieved. Providing funds in the manner we have suggested would ensure that local governments are appropriately resourced and prepared to meet the challenges of the future.

If you have questions or require additional information, please contact Erich Zimmermann, Deputy Director at the National Association of Regional Councils ([erich@narc.org](mailto:erich@narc.org)), Bill Keyrouze, Executive Director of the Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations ([bkeyrouze@ampo.org](mailto:bkeyrouze@ampo.org)), or Mirielle Burgoyne ([mburgoyne@nado.org](mailto:mburgoyne@nado.org)).

Sincerely,



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