

March 12, 2020



The Honorable Peter DeFazio
Chairman
Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
United States House of Representatives
2165 Rayburn Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Richard Neal
Chairman
Committee on Ways and Means
United States House of Representatives
1102 Longworth Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515



The Honorable Sam Graves
Ranking Member
Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
United States House of Representatives
2164 Rayburn Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Kevin Brady
Ranking Member
Committee on Ways and Means
United States House of Representatives
1139 Longworth Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515



Chairmen DeFazio and Neal; and Ranking Members Graves and Brady:

The Metropolitan Civic Leadership Alliance represents organizations comprised of the leading CEOs and senior executives of major employers, professional firms, universities, and other senior civic leaders in large metropolitan areas in the United States. We are committed to making our metropolitan regions the best places to live, work, and grow a business. Our regions represent nearly 20 percent of the country's population and 30 percent of our national Gross Domestic Product (GDP), and we know that to be even more productive, we need to address federal transportation policy in bold, new ways.



If the transportation system doesn't work, neither does the economy. To grow stronger regions, it is essential that we couple significant investment with supportive policies for all types of transportation. A sustainable, long-term investment and policy program by the federal government will enable local and state governments to maximize predictability and advance our integrated transportation system of roads, rails, transit, and trails and remain competitive in today's global economy.



The next federal transportation bill will have a significant impact on our metropolitan regions. We believe there are several policy and funding issues the upcoming transportation reauthorization should address.



• **Fair Playing Field for Funding**



Federal transportation funding should be allocated based on transparent, objective data and performance measures that improve our transportation network and support our national economy. However, Congress and the U.S. DOT are increasingly limiting competition for funds to less populated states or rural areas and limiting the amount of funds going to major metropolitan areas regardless of need and other objective factors. In doing so, they hurt both rural and metropolitan economies by making it difficult to get goods to market and stifling economic

opportunity. Grants meant to improve the condition of bridges, roads, or incent innovation should not shut out major metropolitan areas or states simply by virtue of their population, size, or multimodal needs.

- **Targeted Focus on Major Cities and Metropolitan Regions**

When cities and metropolitan regions can access federal funding and financing directly, they are able to achieve national transportation goals such as congestion reduction and air quality improvement. Many cities already have high-performing transportation departments, which deliver transportation projects more efficiently when given greater control over regional investments. Federal programs should reward cities and metropolitan regions who have the capacity to deliver results with greater funding and programmatic flexibility.

- **Multimodal Freight Program**

The new transportation bill should make funding for national freight fully multimodal, removing the arbitrary cap placed on non-highway investments. Removing the non-highway investment cap will allow the federal freight investment to achieve the greatest return on investment rather than funding being siloed into just one mode of transportation. The program should also give greater attention and authority to metropolitan areas, where complex freight problems affect millions of businesses and people.

- **Leveraging Innovation to Provide Congestion Relief**

New programs should provide federal funding directly to urban areas for innovative, multimodal transportation solutions to address metropolitan congestion. Metropolitan areas are grappling with increasing congestion, yet federal funding and policies are not structured to directly address this congestion. Funding programs should be crafted to help regions address congestion through the development of multi-modal transportation solutions that rely on technology, operational improvements, and, capital improvements where needed. Additionally, federal programs should prioritize a comprehensive set of solutions rather than fund individual projects.

- **Better Connecting Economies with Intercity Rail**

Rail is a vital component of our transportation system and the reauthorization should include a robust rail title. Particular attention should be paid to improving Amtrak's infrastructure, addressing rail state of good repair projects, supporting state-supported passenger rail programs, and enabling a multi-year passenger rail grant program similar to the federal transit Capital Investment Grant program. Many metropolitan regions have no rail connections or inadequate intercity rail options. The federal program should support making new and improved intercity rail connections to foster economic growth between major metropolitan regions.

- **Expanding our Transit Systems**

In the metro areas that drive the American economy, rail and buses are critical. Our transit systems vary – some are legacy systems and require significant funding to ensure they are safe and reliable, and others are rapidly expanding to create a high-quality transit system that can attract employers and ensure all wage earners can access jobs. However, we all agree that our systems need a strong federal partner with a larger capital grant program that can speed up the delivery of the key transit enhancement and state of good repair investments that our metropolitan regions are planning.

- **Major Airport Support**

Airports should be able to access low interest financing available through the U.S. DOT TIFIA program. Each of our metropolitan regions depends on our airports to remain globally competitive. Many of our airports are undergoing massive terminal and facility upgrades to improve connections to the surface transportation network and improve the traveler experience. Giving airports access to low-interest federal financing will lower the cost of capital for these massive rebuilding projects and allow local areas to reinvest those savings to improve our national aviation network.

The metropolitan regions represented in this letter are as geographically diverse as our economies. Yet, we are aligned in our view that our transportation system represents the foundation for our ability to efficiently move goods and people and connect all residents to economic opportunity. The future success of our regions – which is directly tied to the nation’s prosperity – requires a strong federal partner on transportation. We stand ready to work with each of you and our federal delegations to pass a transformative transportation bill this Congress.

Sincerely,

Bay Area Council

Civic Committee of the Commercial Club of Chicago

Columbus Partnership

Greater Houston Partnership

Greater Washington Partnership

Massachusetts Competitive Partnership

Metro Atlanta Chamber

Partnership for New York City

Silicon Valley Leadership Group

The Washington Roundtable