



U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
Washington, DC 20515

John L. Mica
Chairman

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The Honorable John Mica
Chairman
Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
2165 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable John J. Duncan, Jr.
Chairman
Subcommittee on Highways and Transit
B-376 Rayburn HOB
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Mica and Chairman Duncan:

As you prepare for Committee consideration of a long-term Federal surface transportation authorization, we write to share with you our priorities for the bill.

Our nation's intermodal surface transportation network serves as the backbone of economic vitality and quality of life. It facilitates the movement of people and goods, linking communities to each other and the world. It is the foundation of America's economy. We stand ready to work with you to pass legislation that addresses the needs of this network.

Historically, the strength of the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure has been the ability to work together to address the nation's transportation needs. It is our hope that this tradition will continue, and we request the opportunity to meet with you prior to the bill being made public to discuss the proposed bill and work through areas where we agree and disagree. As you recall, last Congress, there were numerous "Big-Four" meetings, as well as significant staff work that went into the development of the Committee Print of the Surface Transportation Authorization Act. To date, that has not occurred this Congress. We believe that working together is the only hope to enact long-term legislation that will allow for the development of a 21st Century surface transportation network.

Ensuring Adequate Investment:

A strong, consistent, and reliable Federal commitment to infrastructure investment is critical to strengthening our Nation's global economic competitiveness, and improving the quality of life and safety of our communities. Therefore, we support the enactment of a substantial multi-year bill providing the level of investment necessary to begin meeting the nation's surface transportation needs.

We support greater utilization of innovative financing tools to leverage additional public and private funding. To this end, we believe the Transportation Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (TIFIA) and the Railroad Rehabilitation and Improvement Financing (RRIF) program must be expanded and strengthened. These techniques, however, are not a substitute for adequate programmatic funding. We must also recognize that the applicability of these financing tools is very limited and they do not work for all regions or all projects, and where undertaken the priority must be placed on protecting and advancing the public interest.

Reforming Surface Transportation Programs:

In addition to addressing the investment shortfall, the next bill must make significant changes to the policies and structure of the surface transportation programs. In making these significant programmatic reforms, we believe the bill must meet the following goals:

- ***Meeting the Needs of All Communities, Regions, and Users*** — Passenger and freight mobility is important to rural, suburban, and metropolitan communities alike. Each community and region has unique surface transportation challenges. The bill should provide the investments and the flexibility necessary to ensure that all communities and regions — rural, urban, and tribal — have the tools to address their specific challenges, and expand mobility and access of people and freight both between and within regions. To that end, a variety of cost-effective, reliable transportation options must be funded to provide access and opportunity to all users of the system and segments of communities. We must continue to provide funding for public transit and other alternative transportation modes from the Highway Trust Fund at their historic shares. We must also continue strong public investment in intercity passenger rail, and reject efforts to sell-off the Northeast Corridor to private investors.
- ***Strengthening Global Economic Competitiveness*** — Surface transportation investments play a critical role in the Nation's economic competitiveness, as well as regional economic development. To keep up with the level of investments our competitors are making in their infrastructure, the bill should ensure adequate funding for projects that facilitate the movement of freight. This should include a program designed to improve the operational performance and roadway and bridge conditions on the National Highway System. We believe that the bill must also provide funding for large, multijurisdictional, multimodal projects that do not fare well in a state-based formula program.

The bill should also require DOT to develop a national freight transportation policy. The policy would improve DOT's ability to coordinate federal funding and facilitate communication among the public sector and private freight transportation stakeholders. Such a policy would also leverage investments and promote partnerships that advance interstate commerce, promote global economic competitiveness and job creation, improve the safe and efficient mobility of goods, and protect the public health and the environment.

We believe that the bill must retain investments in surface transportation research. Failure to do so would be shortsighted, and undercut America's future competitiveness and transportation workforce needs.

- ***Ensuring Good, Safe, Family-Wage Jobs for American Workers*** — Labor protections, including Davis-Bacon and "section 13(c)" transit protections, must be preserved to ensure Federal dollars continue to support good-paying American jobs. Similarly, strong "Buy America" requirements must be attached to Federal surface transportation funds and innovative financing programs, including loan programs. The bill should also continue to provide training and safety protections for workers.
- ***Strengthening Safety*** — The Highway Safety Improvement Program, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's vehicle and driver safety programs, motor carrier safety programs, and the hazardous materials safety programs must at least be maintained at current funding levels.

The bill must also ensure that state and local governments have the tools and resources to take steps to prevent roadway fatalities and serious injuries. This should include continued funding for grade-crossing safety, as well as assistance to state and local governments to upgrade pavement marking and roadway signage retro-reflectivity.

We must also ensure commercial motor vehicle and driver safety, and enhance efficiency in an industry which is vital to our global competitiveness.

We also support inclusion of a provision to block attempts to open the U.S.-Mexico border to cross-border truck traffic until the safety, security, and job concerns raised by Congress are addressed. We also reject attempts to roll-back important railroad and hazardous materials safety regulations.

- ***Improving Project Delivery and Design Process*** — There is a need to reform the oversight and delivery of the surface transportation programs, including providing greater efficiency in the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requirements and review process. We look forward to working with you to identify innovative ways to improve project delivery, while not undermining public participation and NEPA or other environmental laws.

There is also a need to reform the process for planning and designing of projects to more effectively reach the desired objectives. Such an approach will also allow for the "right-sizing" of projects to more appropriately reflect financial constraints.

- ***Maintaining and Strengthening the Opportunity for Disadvantaged Communities to Participate*** — Federal surface transportation funds must continue to provide opportunities for small and disadvantaged businesses to participate in the building and maintenance of the nation's transportation systems. Similarly, all communities should have a voice and be afforded the opportunity to benefit from Federal surface transportation investments. Therefore, existing civil rights and Disadvantaged Business Enterprise requirements should be retained and strengthened.
- ***Improving Performance Management and Accountability*** — We support efforts to make the Federal surface transportation program more outcome-based through the introduction of performance standards, greater transparency, and accountability. Instituting performance management and including provisions to hold funding recipients accountable for their choices on projects will ensure that those choices further the national transportation objectives. This will ensure that taxpayers receive a better return for their investment of gas tax revenues.

We recognize the challenge you face in attempting to move the surface transportation authorization bill forward. The strength and vitality of our nation's infrastructure are critical to the nation's economic competitiveness and quality of life. We stand ready to work with you to enact a long-term bill that meets the investment needs of the intermodal surface transportation network.

We appreciate your attention to these priorities, and look forward to working with you to address the nation's surface transportation challenges.

Sincerely,



NICK J. RAHALL, II
Ranking Member
Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure



PETER A. DEFAZIO
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Highways and Transit