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METROPOLITAN CIVIC LEADERSHIP ALLIANCE CALLS ON CONGRESS TO REAUTHORIZE, RETHINK TRANSPORTATION FUNDING BILL

The Alliance has outlined a bold, visionary platform for transportation funding that rewards innovative thinking and ensures U.S. regions can compete in today's global economy

(Washington, D.C., March 12, 2020) – United by an ambitious transportation agenda for our country, the Metropolitan Civic Leadership Alliance, a new group of 10 business-led civic organizations representing the nation's leading metropolitan regions, has come together to urge Congress to reauthorize and re-envision the federal transportation funding bill – Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act—set to expire this fall.

Recognizing the vital role transportation plays in driving metropolitan regions' economic success and quality of life, the Alliance sent a letter to Congress outlining a platform for a visionary, forward-leaning transportation package that would reward high-capacity regions with greater funding and flexibility. Two former secretaries of the U.S. Department of Transportation (U.S. DOT) have endorsed the Alliance's recommendations.

"Reauthorization is an opportunity to fundamentally improve how our nation invests in transportation," said Ray LaHood, former U.S. DOT Secretary, 2009-13. "Metropolitan regions are our nation's economic engines. To remain competitive, they need a strong federal infrastructure investment program."

"We need to build on previous generations' investments in our roads, rail and transit," said Sam Skinner, former U.S. DOT Secretary, 1989-91. "By making federal funding more flexible and targeting it to metropolitan areas, we will be able to leverage innovation and get more out of every dollar spent."

Members of the Metropolitan Civic Leadership Alliance have spearheaded efforts in their regions to adopt innovative financing and congestion reduction programs, advocated for historic transit and rail investments, and supported efforts to more globally connect airports to metropolitan regions. The Alliance has the real-world experience and collective expertise to

support Congress' efforts to ensure the FAST Act—which funds road, bridge, transit, rail, walking, cycling and freight improvements—goes beyond the status quo and provides the necessary tools for each region to prosper.

“The prosperity and future success of our region – and in turn the nation’s economic success – requires that we invest in a modern, safe and efficient transportation system,” said Jason Miller, CEO of the Greater Washington Partnership. “As we have learned here in the Capital Region, when we put our collective foot forward, we can achieve transformative outcomes. That is why we are eager to partner with our colleagues around the country to push for a bold, regionally impactful transportation funding bill that invests in the tools, innovation and ideas that we know will make us more globally competitive and improve quality of life.”

“As a global transportation hub, the Chicago region is reliant upon a well-maintained, modern, multimodal transportation network,” said Kelly Welsh, President, Civic Committee of Commercial Club of Chicago. “Congress should provide metropolitan areas like Chicago with both the flexibility and the incentive to maximize every dollar we receive through innovation.”

The coalition is comprised of 10 civic organizations, led by CEOs and top executives of major regional employers that have a mission of making their regions great places to live and work. The organizations—the [Bay Area Council](#), [Civic Committee of 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](#), and [The Washington Roundtable](#)—represent regions that include nearly 20 percent of the nation’s population and 30 percent of national Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

The Alliance’s letter to Congress focused on unlocking metropolitan innovation and better supporting regions’ multimodal, integrated transportation systems. It outlined the following policy and funding solutions for the next transportation bill:

- **Create a fair playing field for funding.** Congress and the U.S. DOT are increasingly limiting competition for grants to less populated states or rural areas. Grant programs should not be off-limits to large metropolitan regions.
- **Strategically focus on major cities and metropolitan regions.** Cities and regions can help achieve national transportation goals—such as congestion reduction, air quality improvement and economic development—in innovative ways when they have the opportunity to access federal funding and financing directly. The federal program should reward cities and metropolitan regions that have the capacity to deliver results with greater funding and programmatic flexibility.
- **Expand the nation’s multimodal freight program.** The coalition strongly supports growing both the formula and competitive grant funding dedicated to national freight network improvements. Freight funds should be fully multimodal, and the program should give

greater attention and authority to metropolitan areas, where complex freight problems affect millions of people and businesses.

- **Leverage metropolitan innovation to relieve congestion.** Metropolitan areas are grappling with increasing congestion, yet federal funding and policies are not structured in ways that allow metropolitan regions to address congestion. New formula and competitive programs should be targeted to urban areas to create comprehensive, multimodal transportation solutions via grant programs that spur and reward innovations that reduce congestion.
- **Better connect economies through intercity rail.** Intercity rail is a vital component of our transportation system. The reauthorization should fund expanded intercity rail service, bring Amtrak's infrastructure to a state of good repair and make improvements. A multi-year passenger rail grant program modeled off the transit program's Capital Investment Grant program should be created to give funding certainty to large long-term rail improvements.
- **Enhance our transit systems.** While the transit needs of metropolitan regions vary widely, all of these systems need a strong federal partner with a larger capital grant program that can speed up the delivery of long-planned transit enhancements and state of good repair investments.
- **Finance airport improvements.** Airport terminals and facilities are key connectors to metropolitan regions' road and transit networks, but they are not eligible for low-interest financing available through the U.S. DOT TIFIA program. Giving airports access to this financing tool 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.

"Our metro regions are the nation's major centers of economic activity and innovation," said Kathryn Wylde, President and CEO, Partnership for New York City. "The country depends on us, and we depend on transit infrastructure."

"A strong, vital, state-of-the-art transportation system is a critical element in driving long-term success for our cities and broader metro regions," said Robert L. Reynolds, Chairman, Massachusetts Competitive Partnership, and CEO of Putnam Investments. "Fortifying key aspects of our nation's transportation infrastructure will help position the United States for expanded economic growth, bolster our communities and provide significant quality of life improvement for our citizens. I encourage Congress to act decisively in reauthorizing this important funding bill."

The Metropolitan Alliance for Civic Leadership will continue to promote the urgent need for a bold, visionary federal transportation reauthorization bill through joint activities, as well as individual actions by members in their respective regions.

March 12, 2020



The Honorable Peter DeFazio
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United States House of Representatives
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The Honorable Richard Neal
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The Honorable Sam Graves
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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

Massachusetts Competitive Partnership

Civic Committee of the Commercial Club of Chicago

Metro Atlanta Chamber

Columbus Partnership

Partnership for New York City

Greater Houston Partnership

Silicon Valley Leadership Group

Greater Washington Partnership

The Washington Roundtable
