Major Metropolitan Areas:

Transportation Reauthorization Principles

September 2025

The undersigned federally designated metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs) represent almost 70 million U.S. residents and over $6.1 trillion in gross domestic product. We are united in our support for a robust transportation reauthorization agenda, which includes funding levels and policies that empower our regions. This agenda would allow our regions to spearhead economic development; support access to healthcare, education, and career opportunities for communities; and invest in the future.

The undersigned metropolitan area leaders support the reauthorization priorities offered by our national member associations, including the National Association of Regional Councils and the Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations, as well as the priorities expressed by the Local Officials in Transportation Coalition. We offer the following principles as a reinforcement of and supplement to those other priorities that have been expressed.

Preserve core highway and transit programs

Highway and transit formula programs are the backbone of the federal transportation system, providing certainty that allows for long-term, performance-based planning and consistent project delivery. Formula programs such as the Surface Transportation Block Grant Program support safety, state of good repair, congestion relief, goods movement, and mobility choice — all of which play essential roles in major metropolitan areas. We urge Congress to continue the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act's (IIJA) funding levels (adjusted for inflation) including amounts equivalent to the IIJA's General Fund advance appropriations. We also recommend retaining current shares of funding dedicated to each of the highway and transit modes.

Transit investments are particularly important in many of our major metropolitan areas, as transit efficiently connects workers to jobs, children to schools, and families to healthcare and other daily needs. This is especially important in regions where the amount of available physical space limits highway expansion. Federal investment is required to ensure safety and security for riders, keep assets in good repair, and provide frequent, reliable service — all of which support a cycle of continued ridership growth, service expansion, and economic vitality.

Balance formula and competitive programs

Our organizations recommend that the next reauthorization bill continue to rely primarily on formula programs, which enable local decision-making while minimizing administrative burden across all levels of government. Congress should ensure sufficient funding for formula programs that direct resources to support mobility and economic activity in our nation's major population and job centers.

ARC
Atlanta Regional Commission

Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning

DELAWARE VALLEY dvrpc REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION

MAPC

However, our organizations recognize that discretionary programs remain important for funding complex, regionally and nationally significant projects that are too large to be delivered through formulas. Competitive programs are also vital to support innovative, forward-looking solutions to our nation's transportation challenges. As a result, we support a targeted consolidation of the IIJA's many competitive programs into a smaller number of key competitive funding opportunities. This approach would reduce administrative burdens for both the U.S. Department of Transportation as the grantor and state and local agencies as grantees. The new reauthorization bill could further support critical national priorities by increasing the federal funding share for certain competitive programs, such as those that address national freight bottlenecks.

Target investment to the nation's economic engines

We ask that the reauthorization bill recognize the importance of major metropolitan areas by investing in them. Metropolitan areas play a unique role in supporting federal interests, such as achieving local consensus before federal investment is made in a given region. Further, many national issues — including housing and job markets, freight flows, and community development — are significantly impacted at the metropolitan level.

MPOs are the primary organizations that address transportation and economic development issues at this scale. The next reauthorization bill should continue to provide funding for MPO activities through the Metropolitan Planning and FTA Section 5303 formula funding programs. The reauthorization bill could also provide greater flexibility on the matching fund requirements for these programs, as these requirements can create administrative delays and prevent our rural counterparts from making the most efficient use of federal dollars.

It is vital for the next surface transportation reauthorization bill to retain the unique roles and responsibilities of MPOs, such as the requirements to produce Long-Range Transportation Plans, manage short-term Transportation Improvement Programs, and suballocate federal funds such as the Surface Trans portation Block Grant Program.

Support efforts to streamline project delivery

MPOs exist at the right scale to accelerate project delivery, coordinating diverse stakeholders to reach consensus on investment priorities that maximize the impact of federal funds. Our relationships can break down the silos that may exist across transportation agencies and find opportunities to engage with the private sector. Our datasets and analytical skills facilitate the deployment of performance-based approaches that prioritize transportation projects. Finally, our specialized understanding of our respective regions and federal funding allows us to deploy funding and financing opportunities in strategic ways.

Our efforts to expedite project delivery, without sacrificing the integrity of environmental protection or community involvement, could create opportunities to standardize and simplify grant applications, agreements, schedules, and environmental review requirements across all federal agencies. For example, class of action and findings determinations should be coordinated and transferable across all federal agencies. We also believe that simplifying the application of Categorial Exclusion determinations would dramatically reduce the time needed to complete qualifying projects.

METROPOLITAN TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

MID-OHIO REGIONAL MORPC PLANNING COMMISSION

National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board

Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments

Puget Sound Regional Council

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Prioritize safety

Reauthorization should expand upon the national goal to promote safety by encouraging states, MPOs, and local governments to adopt the Safe System Approach and appropriately fund safety programs. The Safe System Approach is a comprehensive framework that addresses physical infrastructure, operational policies, and traveler behavior to improve safety. The federal government should take this perspective to expand recent safety initiatives and convert them into core formula funding programs. This approach provides a throughline from planning to implementation, all while closely involving data-driven analyses and local perspectives most directly affected by safety trends.

SEMCOG
SOUTHEAST MICHIGAN COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

WASATCH FRONT REGIONAL COUNCIL

As some of the nation's largest federally designated MPOs, we appreciate the opportunity to share our perspectives. Thank you in advance for your consideration of our priorities. We are committed to working with you and your staff as you develop the next iteration of the surface transportation reauthorization bill.

Sincerely,

Atlanta Regional Commission
Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning
Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission
Metropolitan Area Planning Council
Metropolitan Transportation Commission
Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission
National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board
Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments
Puget Sound Regional Council
Southern California Association of Governments
Southeast Michigan Council of Governments
Wasatch Front Regional Council