



May 14, 2012

Dear Senator Durbin and Congressman Costello:

We are so fortunate that both of you are representing Illinois as surface transportation bill conferees. As you proceed with conferencing on Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century (MAP-21) and H.R. 4348, we strongly encourage you to retain policies that will generate much-needed economic development and improve quality of life for Americans. The Metropolitan Planning Council (MPC) strongly supports the policies included in the bipartisan Senate passed MAP-21 and we urge you not to abandon those hard-fought provisions.

MAP-21's focus is the right direction to achieve a brighter future for our nation's transportation network. Specifically MPC recommends you preserve the following MAP-21 provisions in the final conference agreement: the fix-it-first approach that maintains our current highways and transit in a state of good repair; emphasis on national goals and performance measures; local control over active transportation funds; and dedicated transit funding and flexibility, including the transit pre-tax benefits that put transit riders on equal footing with commuters who drive to work and park.

MPC also urges the conference committee to dedicate significant attention toward enhancing the capacity of states and local communities to attract and expand new sources of investment capital. A bipartisan amendment to extend the Federal Highway Administration's tolling and highway user pilot programs and to expand the number of eligible participants was offered by Senators Carper of Delaware, Kirk of Illinois, and Warner of Virginia, but was ultimately withdrawn. Precisely because there is a limited supply of federal dollars, we urge you to provide states and regions with the tools necessary to be innovative in developing and expanding investment sources. While we recognize that the scope of this conference may constrain Congressional authority to expand the flexibility of states and metropolitan regions to introduce tolling and user-charge regimes beyond current law, we urge the conferees to seek all available opportunities to maximize such state and local discretion.

MAP-21 offers the best opportunity to modernize the nation's transportation policy, putting the U.S. on a clear path to improve our global competitiveness. We urge you to embed MAP-21's important provisions, -- ones that will strengthen our nation's economic foothold, -- in the final conference agreement. Thank you again for your leadership and we look forward to working with you to deliver the type of forward-looking transportation authorization bill that our nation and Illinois desperately need.

Sincerely,

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President

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