

We, the Transportation for America Illinois Coalition, applaud Chairman John Mica (R-FL) for holding field hearings across the country, including in Illinois, to hear directly from Americans about their transportation challenges and needs. We look forward to participating in these hearings to share top priorities for regional transportation investments, including:

Jobs. Investments in transportation — including plans to build high-speed rail — create jobs, connect metropolitan areas, grow local economies and help us compete with the rest of the world. Every dollar invested in transit generates as much as \$6 in economic return. Funding transit not only creates jobs for people who directly work in the transit industry, it can also spur American manufacturing as we build buses and locomotives for rail lines. National Railway Equipment Company, which has several plants in Illinois, has designed the N-ViroMotive, which drastically reduces emissions and has fuel savings of 35-70 percent.

Flexibility. Local and state governments must provide a certain percentage of matching funds for every dollar of federal transportation funding they receive; the required match is higher for transit projects than for highway projects. Rather than hamstring states and regions, the federal government should provide greater flexibility to allow states and regions to determine the best solution—highway, transit, rail, bicycle, or pedestrian infrastructure—to meet local needs.

Safety. The government also needs to ensure that we are taking good care of our existing roads and bridges. The American Society of Civil Engineers rated our highway infrastructure a “D-.” The roads and bridges Americans traverse on their daily commutes are crumbling. The new federal surface transportation bill should include a “fix it first” program that designates funding for maintenance and repair. States must be held accountable for ensuring that these funds put them on the path toward improving structurally deficient bridges and poor or mediocre roads.

High-speed rail. The federal government should provide dedicated funding to create an efficient, high-speed and intercity passenger rail network that connects states and regions. We need a 21st Century high-speed rail network to compete with 21st Century competitors.

Simply stated, it is time for a new surface transportation bill. Kudos to Chairman John Mica (R-IL) and Congressman Randy Hultgren (R-IL) for working together to discover Illinois’ priorities for a new surface transportation bill and carrying these priorities back to Washington.

Sincerely,

Transportation for America (T4 America) is the largest, most diverse coalition working on transportation reform today. Our nation's transportation network is based on a policy that has not been significantly updated since the 1950's. We believe it is time for a bold new vision — transportation that guarantees our freedom to move however we choose and leads to a stronger economy, greater energy security, cleaner environment and healthier America for all of us. We're calling for more responsible investment of our federal tax dollars to create a safer, cleaner, smarter transportation system that works for everyone.

Jacky Grimshaw, Center For Neighborhood Technology
Peter Skosey, Metropolitan Planning Council
Gideon Bluestein, Illinois State Chamber of Commerce
Kevin Brubaker, Environmental Law and Policy Center
Paul Rumler, Quad Cities Passenger Rail Coalition/Quad Cities Chamber of Commerce
Richard Harnish, Midwest High Speed Rail Association
Brian Imus, Illinois PIRG (Public Interest Research Group)
Ron Burke, Active Transportation Alliance
Jennifer Henry, Natural Resources Defense Council

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