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June 21, 2012

The Honorable Barbara Boxer
Chairman
Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works
410 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable James Inhofe
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works
456 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

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

The Honorable Nick Rahall
Ranking Member
House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
2163 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Boxer and Mica and Ranking Members Inhofe and Rahall:

As House and Senate conferees enter into final negotiations on federal surface transportation reauthorization, I am writing on behalf of the League of California Cities (League), which represents California's cities, to urge your support for several key provisions that will ensure that California cities get the resources and the input that they need to implement critical transportation projects to improve their communities. These provisions are as follows:

Preserving MPO Structure and Maintaining Equitable Funding Distribution
California incorporates a significant amount of local involvement in its transportation planning through Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs). More than 75 percent of the Surface Transportation Program (STP) funding received by California has been programmed by MPOs and smaller Regional Transportation Planning Agencies (RTPAs) for over 20 years. In addition, California has charged these agencies with regulatory and funding responsibilities. However, the population requirements contained in MAP-21 will not only create uncertainty for California planning processes, but will make it more difficult for local officials to participate in many areas of the state. For these reasons we respectfully request your support for maintaining current law with regard to the population thresholds required for MPOs, as well as for the 62.5 percent funding share distributed to MPOs under STP (renamed the Transportation Mobility Program or TMP under MAP-21).

Directing Bicycle and Pedestrian Access Funding to Local Governments
The League strongly urges you to adopt the language included in MAP-21 via the Cardin-Cochran amendment that would allow local governments to utilize federal bicycle and pedestrian access funding through both sub-allocation to regions, as well as a competitive grant program for small communities that are not part of a MPO. These

provisions are critical, as they would require the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) to distribute federal bicycle and pedestrian funding to the regional and local levels where it is needed most, rather than returning the funding in the annual rescission process and transferring it to another unrelated use. Funding for pedestrian oriented transportation projects is critical as California cities work to implement community redevelopment strategies that seek to improve access to critical community resources and reduce congestion on major local transportation corridors utilizing traditional and alternative modes of transportation.

Streamlining of Environmental Reviews

California cities have long supported the streamlining of review processes to expedite project delivery, and we urge you to maintain the provisions included in both MAP-21 and HR 4348, the Surface Transportation Extension Act of 2012 Part II, which would permanently extend the surface transportation project delivery demonstration program, as well as expand the scope of the original pilot beyond highways to include public transportation and multi-modal projects. The League also urges you to provide language in the conference report, such as language included in Title III of the committee report to HR 7, which indicates that local governments may be included in the implementation of the project delivery demonstration program. Finally, the League urges you to include the language provided in Title VI, Section 615 of HR 4348, which would permit states to substitute their environmental laws for NEPA if the Secretary deems such laws to be substantially equivalent to NEPA. In California, the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) provides equal or greater protection than federal requirements, and we are confident that environmental stewardship would continue under what would be a more centralized and efficient system of implementing transportation projects utilizing CEQA independently.

Thank you for your consideration of these suggested policy requests. California's cities are grateful for your partnership on our transportation priorities, and we commend you on the tireless work you are doing to enact a new, more efficient and effective national surface transportation law. Please let me know if you have any questions or need any additional information, or contact our Washington representatives, Eve M. O'Toole and Dustin McDonald at (202) 419-2505 and (202) 419-2511 respectively.

Sincerely,

Chris McKenzie
Executive Director