



Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning

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June 8, 2015

Via E-mail and First Class, U.S. Mail

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

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

Dear Chairman Inhofe and Ranking Member Boxer:

Congress recently passed another short-term extension of surface transportation law that will keep current spending levels constant through July 31st. This extension will expire concurrently with the Highway Trust Fund (HTF) coming close to insolvency, increasing the urgency for Congress to pass a multi-year transportation bill funded with stable revenues.

As your Committee begins work on such a bill, we would like to bring to your attention important transportation policies regarding the movement of freight we hope you will incorporate into your legislation.

Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century (MAP-21) MAP laid the groundwork for a new national freight program. The law directed DOT to develop a national freight policy, identify a national priority network for investment, and create incentives for states to prepare their own freight plans. However, MAP-21 missed opportunities to comprehensively address freight network challenges by limiting this preliminary work to highways and not dedicating funding to a federal freight program.

The Chicago region has extensive freight volume that impacts the entire country's ability to move goods and people. Between a quarter and a third of all freight in the U.S. originates, terminates, or passes through the metropolitan Chicago region and about half of the nation's intermodal freight touches the Chicago region. Over 925 million tons of freight worth \$1.3 trillion move directly into and out of the Chicago region each year. Freight bottlenecks in our region slow down the entire national transportation network and cost people and businesses money.

We encourage you to greatly expand the freight work included in MAP-21 and focus your policies in ways that will help alleviate congestion impacting us and the country. To that end, we respectfully request any freight program included in your draft transportation bill include:

- **Dedicated Funding to the Freight Program**
A freight program should be funded with contract authority at a level of at least \$2 billion/year.

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- **Multi-modal or Mode-neutral Funding Eligibility**

A freight program should allow states, local communities, and regional planning organizations to fund projects that help move goods and people in the most efficient and safe way, regardless of whether they are road, rail, or port projects.

- **Major Metropolitan Area Focus**

Major metropolitan areas play a critical role in managing goods movement. These regions, like the Chicago region, are key transportation hubs where bottlenecks can impact the entire country. A freight program should provide a key role for Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) in prioritizing and selecting freight projects. This role should include eligibility to apply for new national competitive grants and should ensure MPOs are involved in the planning and programming of funds in these regions.

- **Formula Funding and Chicago Region**

If a freight program includes a formula component, the metrics used to distribute those funds should recognize the outsized role Chicago plays in our national freight system. Chicago is the nation's freight network, where we transfer shipments between modes, have the physical capacity to handle large freight volumes, extensive warehousing and logistics centers, and the appropriate skilled workforce to coordinate and manage goods movement.

- **Competitive Grant Funding Program**

A freight program should include a competitive grant program that is also funded with contract authority and include wide-eligibility for projects of all modes, not just highways. MPOs should be eligible applicants for these grant funds.

Thank you for the consideration of our views. We look forward to working with you to provide our country with the freight transportation network that will keep us competitive in the 21st century economy.

Sincerely,



Toni Preckwinkle, President
Cook County Board of Commissioners



Chris Lauzen, Chair
Kane County Board




Dan Cronin, Chair
DuPage County Board



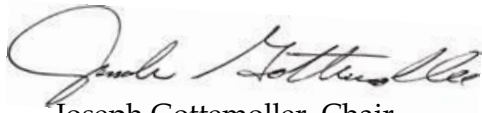
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Commissioner, Chicago Dept. of Transportation



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TK:GRB/stk

cc: CMAP Region Congressional Delegation