

# Metropolitan Planning Council

October 19, 2015

The Honorable Randall Hultgren  
Representative  
U.S. House of Representatives  
40W310 Lafox Road, Suite F2  
Campton Hills, IL 60175

The Honorable Bill Shuster  
Chairman  
Transportation & Infrastructure Committee  
U.S. House of Representatives  
2268 Rayburn HOB  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Hultgren and Chairman Shuster,

Thank you for your commitment to making our nation's transportation system one that provides people more choices, is sustainable and fosters economic development. The Metropolitan Planning Council (MPC) is encouraged that the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee will conduct a full committee markup of a surface transportation reauthorization bill this week.

MPC has long supported a performance-based strategy with targeted investments that advance coordinated regional goals and a strong regional vision that outlines clear priorities for our transportation system. We suggest that the 2015 bill reinstate project selection criteria for TIFIA loans, create a reliable source for long-term revenue and allow states to toll existing highway capacity.

## Expand the use of performance measures

Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (MAP-21) took a major step forward by establishing performance measures in planning and funding transportation investments. These measures should be designed to guarantee accountability, transparency, higher returns on investment and a more level playing field between different types of projects. But there is more work to be done to ensure that federal regulations can achieve those goals.

Congress' role should be to ensure that performance measures emphasize the following metrics:

- Measuring movement of people instead of vehicles;
- Considering impacts on local traffic when measuring freight movement;
- Emphasizing congestion and pollution reduction; and
- Impacts on the growth of the economy.

MAP-21 unfortunately eliminated one of the greatest strengths of the competitive loan fund program known as the Transportation Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (TIFIA): project selection criteria. MPC supports reinstating these criteria to ensure TIFIA loans support only the most innovative nationally or regionally significant projects.

## Reliable long-term funding from the federal government is vital

Since 2008, Congress has transferred more than \$62 billion in general funds to the Highway Trust Fund. As of September, the U.S. Dept. of Transportation estimates that the Highway Trust Fund will drop below a prudent operating balance in

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November and reach a shortfall by July 2016. It is time to identify long-term solutions for transportation funding rather than continue the cycle of running the Trust Fund balance dry then rescuing it with general fund transfers. This approach makes it very difficult for states and cities to plan for their future.

Congress must commit to new, reliable, long-term revenues that ensure our local communities can plan and build for growing populations and economies. Stable and robust funding from Washington is vital; states and cities across the country have made significant efforts to ramp up their own funding approaches and now Washington needs to meet its side of the bargain.

MPC supports increasing the federal gas tax, which has not been adjusted for inflation since 1993. If this user fee had been adjusted, it would now be worth 30.3 cents per gallon, rather than 18.4. Because that change has not been made, Washington is unable to support the nation's transportation needs, which are vital to the health of the U.S. economy, commerce and national defense.

Additionally, Congress should allow states to expand the use of tolling on existing highway capacity. The current federal transportation authorization bill allows this approach in only a few states, limiting the ability of other states to utilize innovative tolling programs that would manage traffic congestion through establishing high occupancy-tolled and variably priced or managed lanes. MPC supports U.S. Senator Mark Kirk's Lincoln Legacy Infrastructure Development Act, which would not only advance congestion pricing but also encourage public-private partnerships to fund transportation improvements.

MPC stands ready to help you and our partners in the coming months to ensure that the next long-term surface transportation reauthorization bill is as effective as possible. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "MarySue Barrett". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

MarySue Barrett  
President  
Metropolitan Planning Council