FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
Friday, February 24, 2012

Contact: Elena Temple/202-286-1100
etemple@usmayors.org
Karen Hinton/703-798-3109
Karen@hintoncommunications.com
Lina Garcia/202-341-6113
lgarcia@usmayors.org

U.S. MAYORS SEE SURGE IN EXPORTS AS KEY TO ECONOMIC GROWTH
Call for Nation-Building With War Dollars Re-Directed for Infrastructure Development at Home

New Report Details Projected Export Growth:
40 Out of 150 Metro Areas Jump 70% & Higher By 2020

Jacksonville, FL—Exports in 40 metro areas, including many far from ports, have the potential to grow by 70% and higher during this decade, projects a report released today by the U.S. Conference of Mayors (USCM). The report highlights the urgent need for nation-building as the country’s mayors called for last June, when they urged the President to end the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and redirect war dollars for railways, roads, bridges and ports.

Released today at a USCM meeting on exports in Jacksonville, FL, the report, entitled U.S. Metro Economies: Exports in the Next Decade, projects that exports will outpace imports by 2020, growing an average eight percent annually. A copy of the report and its key findings can be obtained at www.usmayors.org.

USCM President and Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa said: "If you're serious about creating jobs, you have to be serious about expanding exports. Ninety-five percent of the world's consumers are outside of the United States. To help businesses get their products from cities across the United States to markets around the world, we need to invest in our roads, bridges, ports, and rail systems."

The report, prepared by IHS Global Insight, finds that over the coming decade (2011-2020), exports will account for nearly 40% of real U.S. Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth, a dramatic increase over the last decade, when exports accounted for 26.5% of real GDP growth.

“This could open the flood gates to more jobs across the country,” says Jacksonville, FL Mayor Alvin Brown, Chair of USCM’s Metro Exports and Ports Task Force. “In an increasingly globalized economy, it is vital that the U.S. is able to take advantage of the economic opportunities opening up around the world. To do so, we must get moving on improving and expanding our roads and railways and modernizing our ports, all of which are in need of immediate attention.”

Cities and their metro areas dominate the U.S. export market, accounting for 88% of merchandise value and housing all the nation’s major ports. Over the last few years, foreign trade had grown tremendously in metro regions. From 2005-2008, export merchandise value increased in 300 cities, expanded by more than 50% in 168 of them, and doubled in 70.
The impact of exports on the local economies in many small metro areas is even more pronounced. In the Kingsport-Bristol metro region, for example, exports are nearly 60% as large as GMP (gross metropolitan product), followed by Peoria with 51.6%.

“International trade has been one of the few fiscal bright spots as the nation slowly emerges from the recession, and it is almost entirely centered on our metro areas,” says Minneapolis, MN Mayor R.T. Rybak, USCM’s Vice-Chair of Task Force on Metro Exports and Ports.

“So, the real question now for mayors, governors and the federal government is how can we maximize the potential growth of our exports and get products abroad in the most cost-effective manner?”

At least 70 local leaders including mayors, port directors and trade specialists are meeting in Jacksonville today and Saturday to develop a national agenda that expands exports, improves infrastructure and modernizes ports. Currently, only one percent of U.S. businesses export and 58% of those businesses export to only one market.

“Demand for US exports will be a vital driver of economic growth in the coming decades and there is no doubt that metro areas will play a crucial role in enabling the nation to reap the benefits of international trade,” says Tom Cochran, USCM CEO & Executive Director. “Congress, the White House and the Presidential hopefuls should make no mistake: exports can spur the job creation our country longs for and generate the economic activity essential for the nation to prosper.”

The U.S. Conference of Mayors is the official nonpartisan organization of cities with populations of 30,000 or more. There are 1,210 such cities in the country today, and each city is represented in the Conference by its chief elected official, the mayor. Find us on facebook.com/usmayors, or follow us on Twitter at twitter.com/usmayors.