



THE UNITED STATES CONFERENCE OF MAYORS

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February 11, 2009

The Honorable Ray LaHood
Secretary
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary LaHood:

If we are going to reverse the current economic downturn and create jobs, the quickest, most efficient approach is to support "Main Street" economies by investing in cities and their metro areas, which explains why we are concerned by your recent statements questioning our abilities to distribute highway resources quickly under the economic recovery proposals now pending before Congress.

Over the past few months, Mayors - working with President Barack Obama's transition team and the House and Senate - have forged an economic recovery proposal that ensures that traffic congested areas actually receive funding and critical deferred maintenance is addressed.

Specifically, The U.S. Conference of Mayors' MainStreet Economic Recovery plan has always called upon Congress to ensure that available highway funding flows quickly and directly to the program partners. That is why we have been urging the use of existing funding allocation rules for existing recipients: state departments of transportation and metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs) in the larger metropolitan areas (populations of 200,000 or more). Moreover, Mayors have asked that the funds be allocated to local areas through the Surface Transportation Program (STP), what is essentially the state and local "surface transportation block grant program." Only MPOs in the larger regions receive a formula share of these resources, a practice that has been in place since 1991, and one that guarantees accountability pursuant to current

requirements set forth in federal law. This ensures that Mayors and other local leaders, who own and operate most of our nation's transportation assets and facilities, are at the table and can make decisions on projects in their areas.

We urge this position because it is the right course of action. We see empowering local decision-makers under current law as a mechanism for the swift and effective use of available transportation recovery funds in supporting the nation's economic recovery. Cities and metropolitan areas are where 84 percent of our people live and more than 90 percent of future economic growth will occur, and today they are experiencing unprecedented loss of jobs and economic output.

Mayors are on the frontlines of this economic downturn. We are aligned with President Obama in urging Congress to move quickly on the "American Recovery and Reinvestment Act." Therefore, we request a meeting as soon as possible, including our city transportation directors, to discuss important issues before the House/Senate Conference Committee and future implementation of the bill.

Sincerely,

MAYOR

CITY

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