

July 15, 2015

Honorable John Thune
United States Senate
511 Dirksen Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Honorable Bill Nelson
United States Senate
716 Hart Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Thune and Ranking Member Nelson:

Thank you both for your leadership on transportation this Congress. We are enthusiastic with the recent movement in the U.S. Senate to authorize a long-term Federal surface transportation program and look forward to Wednesday's markup of the Comprehensive Transportation and Consumer Protection Act of 2015.

We support a multimodal competitive freight policy and grant program to enhance U.S. economic competitiveness by improving freight transportation serving agriculture, manufacturing, energy, retail and other sectors. Freight movement is inherently multimodal and multi-jurisdictional and, therefore, particularly requires policies and funding with broad eligibilities and a competitive approach to guarantee that limited funding is targeted to the projects that will make the greatest impact. We believe that the grant program established in the Comprehensive Transportation and Consumer Protection Act of 2015 is an initial step in the right direction.

However, such a freight program should not be created at the expense of the existing TIGER discretionary grant program. In TIGER rounds I-VI, the TIGER program has provided \$4.1 billion for 342 projects in all 50 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. Through the program's first six rounds, the U.S. Department of Transportation received 6,100 applications requesting more than \$124 billion for transportation projects nationwide. As it stands today, TIGER is wildly oversubscribed, receiving 20 times the applications than can be funded.

TIGER is extremely popular for a clear reason – it is the most flexible federal transportation program in terms of eligible projects and grantees. In fact, it is one of the only federal programs to which local governments have direct access. Freight projects have done extremely well under TIGER while struggling to get funding through formula grant programs; however, freight projects are not the only priorities that need a program like TIGER for funding. There is no reason to protect freight priorities at the exclusion of other worthy projects.

Therefore, we request that the Commerce Committee authorize a strong, multimodal freight policy and freight investment grant program, as well as pass a complementary, authorization of the TIGER grant program separate from the multimodal freight discretionary grant program at or near equal funding levels.

Without moving both of these critical investment programs forward, the Comprehensive Transportation and Consumer Protection Act removes local leaders' access to one of the only federal transportation programs open to them today and miss an opportunity to establish transportation investment programs that both promotes the efficient movement of goods and provides affordable mobility and access to opportunity for all Americans.

Sincerely,

The Honorable Gregory A. Ballard
Mayor of Indianapolis
City of Indianapolis, IN

The Honorable Knox Ross
Mayor of Pelahatchie, MS
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Southern Rail Commission

The Honorable John Stromberg
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The Honorable Percy Bland
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The Honorable Timothy Leavitt
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cc: The Honorable Mitch McConnell, Majority Leader, U.S. Senate
The Honorable Harry Reid, Minority Leader, U.S. Senate
The Honorable John Cornyn, Majority Whip, U.S. Senate
The Honorable Richard Durbin, Minority Whip and Assistant Minority Leader, U.S. Senate
The Honorable Orin Hatch, Chairman, Committee on Finance
The Honorable Ron Wyden, Ranking Member, Committee on Finance
The Honorable Thad Cochran, Chairman, Committee on Appropriations
The Honorable Barbara Mikulski, Ranking Member, Committee on Appropriations
The Honorable Richard Shelby, Chairman, Committee on Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs
The Honorable Sherrod Brown, Ranking Member, Committee on Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs
The Honorable James Inhofe, Chairman, Committee on Environment and Public Works
The Honorable Barbara Boxer, Ranking Member, Committee on Environment and Public Works
The Honorable Roger Wicker
The Honorable Roy Blunt
The Honorable Marco Rubio
The Honorable Kelly Ayotte
The Honorable Dean Heller
The Honorable Ted Cruz
The Honorable Deb Fischer
The Honorable Dan Sullivan
The Honorable Jerry Moran
The Honorable Ron Johnson
The Honorable Cory Gardner
The Honorable Steve Daines
The Honorable Maria Cantwell
The Honorable Claire McCaskill
The Honorable Amy Klobuchar
The Honorable Richard Blumenthal
The Honorable Brian Schatz
The Honorable Ed Markey
The Honorable Cory Booker
The Honorable Tom Udall
The Honorable Joe Manchin
The Honorable Gary Peters
The Honorable Patty Murray
The Honorable Susan Collins
The Honorable Jack Reed