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April 7, 2010

The Honorable Barbara Boxer, James Inhofe, Max Baucus and George Voinovich,

Our National Transportation System has little changed since the 1950's, when gas was 20 cents a gallon and President Eisenhower launched the interstate highway system. Today, we live in a very different world. Americans are stuck with lengthy commutes that reduce time available for their families and community engagement. Bridges are crumbling, potentially reducing critical rural and urban access. Volatile energy prices are crippling rural economies and stranding Americans young and old. Populations are being exposed to greater levels of air pollution and having to walk on unsafe streets. Our dependence on foreign oil continues to be a threat to our climate and energy security.

The current program is based on out-dated principles, and without reform even increased investment in transportation will not solve the problems that plague Americans on a daily basis. Americans are ready for a new direction. They are demanding transportation options that are cheaper, faster, cleaner and safer. They want investments that will help America compete and thrive in the global economy. Transportation for America and our partners believe that Congress must move toward a 21<sup>st</sup> Century system that focuses on accountability and results, while creating jobs, providing access to opportunity for all Americans, reducing carbon emissions and our dependence on foreign oil, and improving America's economic competitiveness. Congress should incorporate the following principles to craft a bold new transportation bill that gets America moving in the right direction.

1. **A 21<sup>st</sup> Century Transportation Network:** Invest in a seamless, multimodal system to create a world-class, efficient, sustainable transportation network. As our economy shifts we must rapidly catch up to other developed countries by targeting investments in high-speed and intercity rail, world-class public transportation, intercity bus, bicycling and walking networks and multimodal transfer points. We must fix bottlenecks in our freight corridors, clean up our ports and trucks, and get smarter about managing highway congestion through technology.
2. **Improved Accountability and Measurable Results:** Establish national transportation objectives and improve the accountability of our federal transportation program. The federal government must ensure that funding for transportation is invested wisely by holding the U.S. Department of Transportation, states, and regions accountable for progress toward primary objectives, including: reducing dependence on oil, enhancing efficiency of the transportation network, lowering carbon emissions from transportation,



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improving community health, reducing traffic fatalities and injuries, and ensuring social equity and economic opportunity across our society.

3. **Prioritize a State of Good Repair:** Establish a national program to restore and repair existing highways, transit systems, intercity passenger rail, bicycle and pedestrian facilities, and bridges. To ensure this type of investment in every state, federal funds should be dedicated for the purpose of bringing existing transportation infrastructure into a state of good repair, and grantees should work with the Department of Transportation to demonstrate their progress on these outcomes.
4. **Provide Access and Jobs for Those Most in Need:** Transportation has for too long served as a barrier to opportunity for low-income, rural and disabled Americans. The federal transportation program must prioritize projects that increase access for families in cities, suburbs and small towns across America, who need to get to jobs, schools and health care. New funding for job training and workforce development in the federal transportation program could not only re-employ tens of thousands of low-income workers and provide them access to long-term construction careers. New investment in transit systems would create new opportunities for American manufacturers to produce the needed infrastructure for transit, high-speed and intercity passenger rail systems, and vehicle and component parts.
5. **Balance the Playing Field:** While much of the highway system is built out, our public transportation system, including high-speed and intercity passenger rail, needs robust funding for maintenance and expansion to help meet increased demand. Transit should receive at least one-third of formula federal transportation funds and should be treated on a level playing field when competing for flexible funds. Transit agencies also need more flexibility to use federal funds for expenses such as hiring and operating their equipment. Infrastructure devoted to bicycles and pedestrians should also account for three percent of formula funds.
6. **Support Sustainable Development:** We need a more efficient system that rewards communities for developing in smarter, more sustainable ways by reducing energy use and carbon emissions while improving the efficiency of our transportation network and reducing transportation and housing costs. State and local governments should undertake scenario planning to develop plans that account for population growth, development patterns and transportation needs as well as reduce transportation infrastructure costs and preserve open space, farms, and ranchlands.
7. **Encourage Local Leadership and Innovation:** Provide funding and decision-making authority to local regions. Empower both metropolitan and rural areas to address transportation, housing, and economic development issues in their communities through innovative and inclusive designs.
8. **Greener and Cleaner Freight:** The freight network is a critical part of our economy, but we must prioritize investments that will improve air quality and reduce public health impacts on communities from freight traffic. Funding for truck engine retrofits, reinvesting in freight rail corridors, establishing intermodal facilities and developing intermodal ITS systems can minimize pollution in surrounding neighborhoods and save Americans time and money.



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9. **Save Lives, Promote Health:** Support safe walking and biking, reduced exposure to vehicle injuries and dirty air. Provide federal funding and direction so that communities can retrofit unsafe roads; create complete streets to improve safety for motorists, pedestrians and cyclists; and encourage active living in communities free from harmful levels of vehicle emissions. Increased attention to transportation safety is necessary, especially as dangerous rural roads and distracted drivers pose increased safety threats.
10. **Smart Financing:** Broaden the capital and operating funding base. The financial needs for transportation investment in the country are far greater than current federal sources. Federal policy should encourage and support innovative solutions for new sources for state and local matching funds, build on regional partnerships, and diversify revenues.

The transportation authorization you are working on requires a new vision for the 21<sup>st</sup> century that ensures that convenient and affordable travel options are available to everyone, in every community, at every stage of life. America cannot afford to continue business as usual for the next federal transportation program – the reforms above will help facilitate economic development and improve quality of life for all Americans. We believe Congress is up to the task if they follow the recommendations above, and we thank you for your leadership in this critical endeavor.

Sincerely,

Transportation For America  
Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety  
Alliance for Biking and Walking  
America Bikes  
American Bus Association  
American Institute of Architects  
American Planning Association  
Amtrak  
Apollo Alliance  
Arcadia Land Company  
Association of Programs for Rural Independent Living (APRIL)  
Center for Rural Strategies  
Citizens for Transportation Reform  
Congress for the New Urbanism  
HRI Properties  
Institute for Transportation and Development Policy  
Jim Sallis, PhD, Professor, San Diego State University  
Jonathan Rose Company  
League of American Bicyclists  
League of Conservation Voters  
LOCUS  
McCormack, Baron, Salazar

**Transportation for America** is a broad and growing coalition of national, state and local elected officials, business, and organizations calling for the renewal of our national transportation program for the 21st century.



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National Alliance of Community Economic Development Associations (NACEDA)  
National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO)  
National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO)  
National Center for Bicycling and Walking  
National Coalition for Promoting Physical Activity  
National Complete Streets Coalition  
National Congress of American Indians  
National Housing Conference  
National Low Income Housing Coalition  
National Trust for Historic Preservation  
Natural Resources Defense Council  
Partnership for Prevention  
PolicyLink  
Prevention Institute  
Rails-to-Trails Conservancy  
Real Estate Roundtable  
Reconnecting America  
Renaissance Downtowns  
Safe Routes to School National Partnership  
Scenic America  
Sierra Club  
Smart Growth America  
State and Territorial Injury Prevention Directors Association (STIPDA)  
Sustainable Northwest  
Trust for America's Health  
U.S. Green Building Council  
U.S. PIRG