



November 3, 2010

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Obama:

Thank you for your leadership in laying out a bold vision for renewing and expanding our nation's transportation infrastructure. We applaud your urgent call for new transportation investments that will put people back to work while laying the foundation for future national economic prosperity.

Though critical to all of us on a daily basis, the undersigned organizations are deeply concerned that the need for smart transportation investments that improve the economic prospects for disadvantaged communities has taken a back seat in the national political debate. We have come together to form the Equity Caucus at Transportation for America to call not only for a six-year transportation authorization that can put Americans back to work, but specifically expand mobility and opportunity for all Americans.

While we need transportation investment to strengthen our economy now—and increase our nation's growth and productivity in the future—we also need to reform the way America currently invests. We applaud your call for carefully targeted investments in transportation projects that can satisfy clearly articulated national goals for mobility, access, safety, affordability, environmental sustainability, and economic competitiveness. We strongly agree that the earmark-driven, unaccountable spending of the past must end. Americans do not want to simply increase the amount of funding for transportation if the money goes into the same broken, unaccountable, and inequitable system.

As you have said, we cannot have a strong growing economy without a strong growing middle class. Therefore, as your Administration works with Congress to advance both shorter-term transportation investments and a long-term surface transportation authorization, we urge you to focus on investments that achieve the following goals:

- 1) Create affordable transportation options for all people.** Our nation's transportation system should provide everyone—regardless of income, race, age, or disability—with affordable transportation choices. In order to do so, we must significantly increase funding and maximize existing funding that supports enhanced public transportation service, bicycle facilities, and sidewalks—particularly in disadvantaged communities. Given the fact that transit agencies around the country are cutting service, raising fares, and laying off workers, we must also give local communities flexibility to use federal funds to help operate local public transportation systems.
- 2) Ensure fair access to quality jobs, workforce development, and contracting opportunities in the transportation industry.** Transportation provides access to good-paying jobs both in the

construction of all types of projects—highways, transit, roads, and bridges—and in the operation of the system. Proactive policies are needed that establish and uphold job quality protections and standards, provide resources for affordable job training and career pathways for all people (including women, people of color, low-income individuals, and youth), and open up opportunities for disadvantaged businesses to access contracting opportunities in the transportation sector.

- 3) Promote healthy, safe, and inclusive communities.** Transportation investments done right can help us achieve other important national goals such as improving health, promoting safety, and fostering environmental sustainability. This can be achieved by strategies that: encourage localities to consider the health impacts of transportation projects; require communities to plan for roads, sidewalks, and active transportation networks that are safe and welcoming to everyone; require and fund a greener and cleaner freight systems; reduce the combined cost of housing and transportation; and preserve and expand affordable housing near transit, particularly for our nation’s poorest families. It is also important to increase resources at the U.S. Department of Transportation to support transportation projects that better integrate housing, community economic development, and environmental sustainability goals.

- 4) Invest equitably and focus on results.** Federal transportation funds should be distributed in a manner that is transparent, accountable, democratic, and with a focus on achieving clearly articulated outcomes that ensure the economic prosperity, health, and vitality of all communities. This can be accomplished by establishing criteria and aligning federal funding to national transportation outcomes such as improved mobility for people and goods, access, transit ridership, health and safety, as well as reduced household costs, carbon emissions, and vehicle miles traveled. It is also important to actively enforce civil rights provisions to ensure fair and equitable access to the benefits of our transportation system; utilize new revenue to expand or improve mobility and access for underserved communities; and improve accountability and public engagement in decision making about transportation projects.

We stand ready to work with your Administration to craft details on how to carry forward your compelling vision for transportation investment and reform.

Sincerely,

Alliance for Biking & Walking
Alternatives for Community & Environment, Inc.
Amalgamated Transit Union
America Bikes
American Public Health Association
Apollo Alliance
Association of Pedestrian and Bicycle Professionals
Center for Community Change
Center for Independent Living for Western Wisconsin, Inc.
Center for Rural Strategies
Center for Social Inclusion
Change to Win
CLASP
Developing Communities Project
Enterprise Community Partners

Gamaliel Foundation
Good Jobs First
Greenlining Institute
International Brotherhood of Teamsters
Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity
Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights
Local Initiatives Support Corporation
NAACP
National Association of County and City Health Officials
National Complete Streets Coalition
National Congress of American Indians
National Housing Conference
National Housing Trust
National Low Income Housing Coalition
National Urban League
National Women's Law Center
Opportunity Agenda
Partnership for Working Families
PolicyLink
Poverty and Race Research Action Council
Public Advocates
Rails-to-Trails Conservancy
Reconnecting America
Safe Routes to School National Partnership
Smart Growth America
TransForm
Transit Riders for Public Transportation
Transportation Equity Network
Transportation for America
Trust for America's Health
United Church of Christ, Justice and Witness Ministries
Wider Opportunities for Women
YouthBuild USA