

February 27, 2012

Senator Harry Reid  
Majority Leader  
361A Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Senator Mitch McConnell  
Minority Leader  
522 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Majority Leader Reid and Minority Leader McConnell:

Thank you for your leadership in working to advance a surface transportation reauthorization that creates jobs, renews our nation's transportation infrastructure, and provides all people with access to a range of transportation options. The investment from this legislation is critical to putting people back to work immediately and laying the foundation for our nation's future economic prosperity.

The undersigned organizations strongly believe that federal transportation investment must create bridge to opportunity for everyone. To that end, we urge you to ensure that the final surface transportation reauthorization bill be crafted to:

1. Preserve and expand existing programs that fund essential transportation options—bicycling, walking, and public transportation.
2. Expand access to quality transportation jobs for the chronically-unemployed, low-income people, individuals with disabilities, women, and communities of color.
3. Strengthen enforcement of existing civil rights provisions.
4. Improve transportation outcomes through strategic planning with measures that promote economic and social equity.
5. Reform transportation funding to lower household expenses and foster community development.

The work of the Senate Committees on Environment and Public Works, Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs, and Commerce, Science and Transportation Committees is commendable. We appreciate that within legislation adopted by these committees there are provisions which address, in part, the aforementioned equitable transportation priorities (as noted in the attached document). We urge that these provisions be included in the final reauthorization legislation.

For everyone to benefit from our transportation investments, it is imperative that the final reauthorization bill include provisions to address the full range of the aforementioned transportation priorities. As drafted, the current proposals could lead to a surface transportation bill that would leave millions of struggling Americans behind.

Several Senators have offered amendments that would strengthen the reauthorization proposals by ensuring that our billions of dollars are invested in a manner that allows all Americans to

connect to greater economic opportunity. We urge you in your leadership capacity to include the provisions of those amendments in the final reauthorization bill.

Americans are ready to get back to work building our nation's future. Furthermore, to remain economically-competitive, our nation needs a new approach to transportation investment that is accountable, just, fair, and equitable. It is in that spirit, that we urge you to build upon the legislation adopted by the aforementioned committees by incorporating the provisions of the amendments listed on the attached document into the final surface transportation reauthorization. To that end, we stand ready to work with you.

Sincerely,

PolicyLink

Transportation for America

**YOUR ORGANIZATION NAME TO BE ADDED HERE.**

Cc:

Senator Barbara Boxer  
Chairman, Committee on Environment and Public Works

Senator James Inhofe  
Ranking Member, Committee on Environment and Public Works

Senator Tim Johnson  
Chairman, Committee on Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs

Senator Richard Shelby  
Ranking Member, Committee on Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs

Senator Jay Rockefeller  
Chairman, Committee on Commerce Science and Transportation

Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison  
Ranking Member, Committee on Commerce Science and Transportation

Enclosure

Provisions that advance Equitable Policy Priorities for Surface Transportation		
Equitable Policy Priority <sup>1</sup>	Recently-adopted <sup>2</sup> provisions that <u>should be retained</u>	Provisions that <u>should be added</u>
<i>Preserve and expand existing programs that fund essential transportation options— bicycling, walking, and public transportation.</i>	This priority would be advanced in part by several provisions in the Senate Banking Bill including: robust funding levels for transit; coordinated transit service for seniors and people with disabilities; sustained investment in transit service that connects low-income workers to job centers; and enhanced flexibility for transit agencies serving communities of a larger population to leverage capital funds to maintain bus and rail service during times of economic hardship.	The final bill should: strengthen access for local/regional governments to resources that would improve biking and walking infrastructure, as provided by the Cardin/Cochran Amendment #1549; extend greater operating flexibility to transit systems that serve small towns and rural communities as provided in the Shaheen/Wicker Amendment #1569; and enhance rural and small urban transit service with strengthened coordination of public transportation plans, as provided by the Akaka Amendment #1720.
<i>Expand access to quality transportation jobs for the low-income people, individuals with disabilities, women, and communities of color.</i>	N/A <sup>3</sup>	The final bill should include provisions that establish a Construction Careers Demonstration Program to provide a pathway into transportation careers for disadvantaged workers, as provided by the Gillibrand Amendment #1648.
<i>Strengthen enforcement of existing civil rights provisions.</i>	This priority would be advanced in part through provisions in the Senate Banking Bill that require a GAO report to evaluate the Federal Transit Administration’s ability to address discrimination, and expand eligibility for federal-fund recipients to conduct research on impacts of transportation on transit-dependent populations, as well as to access technical assistance that may include transportation equity (i.e. to assess the impact that planning, investment, and operations have on low-income people and communities of color.)	The final bill should include provisions that initiate a quadrennial Equal Opportunity Assessment of all federally-funded transportation programs and projects, as provided by Cardin Amendment #1542.

<sup>1</sup> These have been identified as priorities for the surface transportation bill by the Equity Caucus at Transportation for America— formed by the nation’s leading civil rights, community development, racial justice, economic justice, faith-based, health, housing, labor, environmental justice, tribal, public interest, women’s, and transportation organizations. For more information please see: [www.t4america.org/equitycaucus](http://www.t4america.org/equitycaucus).

<sup>2</sup> These include provisions that were included in the bills related to the transportation reauthorization that were adopted by the Senate Committees on Environment and Public Works, Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs, and Commerce, Science and Transportation.

<sup>3</sup> While MAP-21 includes provision to maintain the On-the-Job Training Program for highway uses and the Senate Banking Bill establishes a new human capital development program, neither is sufficient for expanding access or ensuring creation of quality jobs.

<b>Provisions that advance Equitable Policy Priorities for Surface Transportation</b>		
<b>Equitable Policy Priority</b>	<b><i>Recently-adopted provisions that <u>should be retained</u></i></b>	<b><i>Provisions that <u>should be added</u></i></b>
<i>Improve transportation outcomes through strategic planning with measures that promote economic and social equity.</i>	This priority would be advanced in part through provisions included in MAP-21, but more significantly by provisions in Title XII of the Senate Commerce Bill, which establish performance measures related to health, mobility, and environment for transportation projects.	The final bill should include additional provisions to foster better community health by ensuring that state-wide performance plans include a focus on improving air quality and reducing congestion, as provided by Carper-Lieberman # 1665.
<i>Reform transportation funding to lower household expenses and foster community development.</i>	This priority would be advanced to a certain extent by a provision in the Senate Banking Bill that would establish a \$20 million pilot program to support the creation of livable, transit-oriented communities.	<p>The final bill should restore competitive performance criteria focused on air quality and livability to the Transportation Infrastructure Finance Innovation Act Program, so that these funds are leveraged for transportation projects that promote economic revitalization, environmental benefits, and affordable housing.</p> <p>The final bill should include provisions to offer loans for infrastructure and community facilities around transit-oriented communities, as provided in Jumpstarting Transit-Oriented Development Act (S. 2053), and to allow regions<sup>4</sup> to direct surface transportation dollars toward funds that efficiently leverage private dollars and additional public dollars to build affordable housing and community facilities along transit corridors.</p>

<sup>4</sup> Metropolitan planning organizations seek flexibility for using federal resources in order to partner with the private sector for transit-oriented development projects. For an example of how this would function please see: <http://www.bizjournals.com/sanfrancisco/news/2011/03/24/mtc-affordable-housing-50-million-fund.html>.