INTRODUCTION

We were really encouraged to hear that the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee plans to move its surface transportation bill forward in September. With the current law expiring on September 30—and several important programs at risk of lapsing—there's real urgency to getting this done. We know Senator [NAME] and your team are following this closely and working to make sure the bill reflects what communities across [STATE] actually need.

That's why we've brought together local and regional transportation leaders from across [STATE] who are part of the Local Officials in Transportation—or LOT—Coalition. We appreciate you taking the time to hear directly from the people who plan, build, and maintain the transportation system on the ground.

WHY LISTEN TO LOT

Together, our coalition represents urban, suburban, and rural communities across the country. We plan, own, build, and maintain a huge share of the transportation system. But when you look at where the federal funding actually goes, the numbers don't match those responsibilities.

Local governments own 43% of the federal-aid highway network and 75% of all public road miles. These roads and bridges are the backbone of the national transportation system and our economy—the first and last miles of nearly every commute, delivery, and freight movement.

Yet, on average, only about **16% of federal transportation funding reaches the local level**. And we're seeing the consequences of that underinvestment. Nearly half of locally owned roads are in poor condition, compared with just 7% of similar state-owned roads. Locally owned bridges are also twice as likely to be in poor condition as state-owned bridges.

That's the basic issue we're trying to address: the communities responsible for so much of the system—and some of the infrastructure in greatest need—need a fairer and more predictable share of federal resources.

THE ASK

In our requests to Congress, we asked for a fairer share of resources:

1) Suballocate more flexible formula funding at the regional level. That would give communities reliable resources to address the transportation needs they have identified locally—and help funding reach the roads, bridges, and systems that Americans use every day.
2) Strengthen transportation planning. Every part of a state, especially our rural communities, should have the capacity to identify its priorities, develop strong projects, and compete for federal investment.

The BASICS Act lays out several practical ways Congress can move those priorities forward:

- **Increase flexible funding.** Grow the Surface Transportation Block Grant Program and continue suballocating at least 55% of those funds. That would provide more flexible funding for state, regional, and local partners—helping ensure that every part of the transportation network has the resources needed to address its priorities.
- **Invest in locally owned bridges.** Dedicate at least 25% of federal bridge funding to locally owned bridges. Local governments own about half of the nation's bridges, and those bridges are generally in much worse condition. The House's BUILD America 250 Act recognized this need by increasing bridge investment and reserving 25% of certain bridge funding for locally owned bridges.

- **Get safety funding where fatalities are happening.** Direct at least 25% of federal safety funding to local and regional projects, including through programs like HSIP and Safe Streets and Roads for All. About 85% of traffic deaths occur off the Interstate Highway System, so safety funding needs to reach the local roads where most fatalities are occurring.
- **Strengthen metropolitan and rural planning.** Increase metropolitan planning funding to 2.5% of the Federal-aid Highway Program and establish a 10% rural transportation planning set-aside within State Planning and Research funding. Good planning helps communities identify the right projects, save money, provide technical assistance, and move those projects through the federal process more efficiently. Congress should also eliminate the local match for these planning funds. The BUILD America 250 Act recognized the importance of planning by expanding eligible uses and giving MPOs the option to receive their planning funds directly.

CLOSING

At the end of the day, this is about making sure federal transportation funding reaches every part of [STATE] and turns into real projects on the ground. Giving local and regional partners more predictable funding and access to federal resources will help move priority projects forward faster. It will also strengthen coordination and improve the transportation system for everyone.

We'd really like to hear your reaction. Do these proposals seem reasonable to you? Are there any questions or concerns we can help address as the Committee develops its bill?

ASK: We'd really like to hear your reaction. Do these proposals seem reasonable to you? Are there any questions or concerns we can help address as the Committee develops its bill?

Additional Context

Collaboration is Essential: MPOs and RTPOs are essential partners in the state-regional intergovernmental partnerships. State DOTs are critical partners, but no state agency can be embedded in every community or know every local transportation need. Local governments, MPOs, and RTPOs serve as the eyes and ears of the transportation system in their communities. They bring local knowledge to the table, convene partners, identify priorities, and help turn community needs into important projects. Elevating the role of MPOs and RTPOs will strengthen the state-local relationship and help all of us deliver projects more effectively in partnership with the state DOT.

Local and Regional Partners Have a Strong Track Record: Local governments and regional organizations have demonstrated that they can successfully manage federal funding when given the opportunity. Through formula and competitive programs under the IIJA, local and regional partners were able to access approximately 25% of federal transportation investment. We do not want to lose that progress. If Congress consolidates, reduces, or eliminates competitive programs in the next bill, local and regional access should be preserved through increased suballocated formula funding. Communities shouldn't lose access to federal investment simply because Congress changes how the funding is distributed.

This Helps the Senator Deliver Visible Results: Supporting local and regional transportation funding also gives Senator [NAME] an opportunity to show communities across [STATE] exactly how federal investment is producing results. When most funding flows through state-level programs, it can be difficult for communities to see the federal role behind individual projects. More direct and predictable funding for local governments, MPOs, and rural regions would give the Senator tangible projects to point to in communities throughout the state. Our members understand where these resources come from, and we want to help make sure Senator [NAME] receives credit for delivering meaningful results back home.