



ILLINOIS METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION ADVISORY COUNCIL

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February 26, 2010

United States Senator Dick Durbin  
Assistant Majority Leader  
309 Hart Senate Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Via Fax # 202.228.0400

Dear Senator Durbin:

The Illinois Metropolitan Planning Organization is writing to express our thanks and support for legislation that will continue to save and create jobs. MPOs are federally mandated and funded transportation policy organizations comprised of local governments and governmental transportation authorities in 385 metropolitan areas.

In particular, we are very supportive of continued federal investment in surface transportation infrastructure. The investment will provide employment opportunities to those who possess the skills and expertise necessary to plan, design, maintain, and construct a transportation system essential to our economic growth and the prosperity. As you develop the legislation, we strongly recommend that you continue to suballocate at least 30% of highway funding by population, which is consistent with the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) and transportation law.

Under the ARRA "use-it-or-lose-it" provisions, our MPOs in close cooperation with local, state, and federal partners, accelerated our planning processes in order to update our transportation improvement programs (TIP) to advance infrastructure projects that met the criteria required by ARRA. Under ARRA we were also required to continue to comply with existing requirements under federal transportation and environmental law. We are concerned that the "use-it-or-lose-it" provisions in the House "Jobs for Main Street Act of 2010" will not allow a reasonable amount of time to perform these required activities. The 90-day deadline to have 50% of highway and transit funding under contract may also conflict with state contracting laws and continue to limit the majority of expenditures to pavement improvements projects, as was the case under ARRA. We request that Congress establish a reasonable deadline that ensures federal funds can be used in a timely manner and not put our state at risk of forfeiting these resources.

Based on the results of a recent survey conducted by AMPO, members have also commented on the length of time for review and approval of "ready-to-go-projects." The mixture of a more detailed and onerous review than typical for state federal aid projects and the short deadlines for implementation together have contributed in at least some areas to the delay of obligation of otherwise ready-to-go federal-aid (non-stimulus) projects already in line for review. Lastly, we were told by USDOT that ARRA funds could not be used for planning studies and preliminary engineering work. These are clearly eligible activities under law, would have employed planners and engineers, advanced more projects, and could lead to construction jobs in the future. We request that Congress include legislative language that clarifies the eligibility of planning and preliminary engineering activities in a jobs bill.

Again, we thank you for your support of strong transportation planning and jobs in the transportation industry and would appreciate an opportunity to discuss these issues with you. If you have any questions, please contact our Chairman, Cameron Moore at 217.819.4129.

Sincerely,

Chairman, Cameron Moore (CUATS), Vice Chair, Randy Blankenhorn (CMAA); Secretary/Treasurer, Terry Kohlbus (PPUATS)

Bi-State Regional Planning Commission  
Champaign Urban Area Transportation Study  
Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning  
Danville Area Transportation Study  
Decatur Area Transportation Study

DeKalb-Sycamore Transportation Study  
East-West Gateway Council of Governments  
Kankakee Area Transportation Study  
McLean County Regional Planning Commission

Peoria/Pekin Urbanized Area Transportation Study  
Rockford Metropolitan Agency for Planning  
Springfield Area Transportation Study  
Stateline Area Transportation Study