

May 19, 2008

Senator Richard Durbin  
332 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Senator Durbin,

I am writing on behalf of the Illinois Metropolitan Planning Organizations to express our concerns regarding the funding rescissions planned under SAFETEA-LU. The Illinois MPO Caucus was recently formed as a subsidiary of the Illinois Association of Regional Councils. The MPO Caucus includes all fourteen Metropolitan Planning Organizations in the State that collectively plan and program transportation improvements that directly serve nearly 12.5 million people, indirectly impact millions more and have a significant role in the state and national economies. The transportation network within our planning areas includes 7,343 miles of railroad networks, 34,911 miles of highways, and more than 5,900 bridges. The MPO caucus provides a forum for the sharing of information and best practices, policy and programming recommendations regarding transportation issues, and research intended to improve transportation planning and programming in Illinois.

Our State must plan for many transportation challenges including earthquakes and flooding in southern Illinois, a strained infrastructure system in the Chicago region and rail infrastructure that creates a bottleneck of consumer products and raw materials that threatens the State and national economies. With the challenges facing our state, we need flexibility and certainty in planning and programming dollars appropriated through the Federal Transportation Budget. The transportation planning and programming process relies upon stable forecasts of federal funds that will be available to our metropolitan areas due to the long term nature of planning and construction of these significant transportation projects. The current process that authorizes one funding level, appropriates another and then rescinds balances does not allow for the smooth and timely delivery of much needed transportation projects. As you may be aware, the current federal transportation funding mechanism, SAFETEA-LU, requires the federal government to rescind all unobligated funds upon expiration, which is scheduled for September 2009. The rescission of nearly \$440 million in unobligated transportation funds from the past four years will negatively impact our state well into the future. The FFY 2009 rescission for Illinois is estimated in the range of \$285 to \$300 million.

The MPO Caucus urges you to work to ensure that these funds remain available to address the transportation needs of Illinois by eliminating the rescissions planned by the USDOT.

Respectfully,

Cameron Moore  
Chairman  
Illinois MPO Caucus

cc: Secretary Milton Sees, IDOT  
MPO Caucus Member