



August 20, 2019

Senator David Perdue
Chair, Banking Subcommittee on Transportation

Dear Senator Perdue,

On behalf of the American Planning Association (APA), Georgia Chapter, thank you for your leadership on the on-going work related to surface transportation reauthorization. APA appreciates your efforts to prioritize transportation and infrastructure as critical components of creating great communities. APA Georgia represents over 1,100 planners, planning officials and engaged citizens who work to ensure prosperity, opportunity and mobility for all. An important part of our work is ensuring that planners have the tools to address the evolving nature of transportation policy.

Last month, important steps were made toward surface transportation reauthorization in 2020 with the bipartisan vote to approve the America's Transportation Infrastructure Act. As critical work moves forward on transportation and infrastructure, APA identifies four critical components of reauthorization and funding:

- 1) **States and communities need increased, sustainable, and predictable funding.** This means advancing increases in vital discretionary programs through THUD appropriations legislation. It means increasing the gas tax to support smart and forward-looking plans and projects while seriously moving toward a new user-fee revenue model. Congress should also advance new finance tools like private activity bonds and advanced refunding of municipal bonds that support critical investment. The Rebuild America Act of 2019 (H.R. 2864), Building United States Infrastructure and Leveraging Development Act (H.R. 2541) and Investing in Our Communities Act (H.R. 2772) are examples of bills that work toward accomplishing these needs.
 - 2) **Federal transportation programs must do more to promote transit, biking and walking. These options make places safer and healthier and provide more options for mobility.** This means expanding and improving the TAP program, increasing and better targeting funding for the BUILD (formerly TIGER) program and transit grants, significantly increasing transit funding, expanding bikeshare, and supporting critical planning and design for a better network. The Transportation Alternatives Enhancement Act (S. 1098) is one way that Congress can promote more options for mobility.
 - 3) **Our transportation policies have to make communities more resilient and address the challenge of climate change.** This will require new approaches that require greater resiliency in infrastructure and more planning for resilience and hazards. It also means supporting expanding planning that incorporates climate measurement and mitigation. And, it requires investment in infrastructure that supports reduced emissions through bills like the Green Transportation Act (H.R. 3822).
 - 4) **Transportation legislation must be forward-looking and help communities prepare for the future.** Advancing understanding of the implications and new practices related to incorporating
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technology into planning, decision-making, public engagement and the infrastructure itself is critical. Special attention needs to be paid to the emergence of autonomous vehicles and connected infrastructure through research and standards related to local impacts. Congress should invest in helping communities plan for a new future of transportation and not simply pile investment into past approaches through legislation such as the Preparing Localities for an Autonomous and Connected Environment Act (H.R. 2542).

In addition, our members of the Georgia Chapter have identified the following opportunities that would enable our state's Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) to improve surface transportation offerings across Georgia:

- 1) **Continue to Focus on Federal Initiatives to Streamline Environmental Processes.** Beyond the current federal focus on simplifying regulatory processes, also empower high-performing MPOs to utilize PL and 5303 funds to act in a stronger leadership role to improve the nation's transportation project delivery for federal-aid projects. MPOs are currently restricted from using federal planning funds for project delivery.
- 2) **Support the Continued Development of a Multimodal National Freight Network, Including Dedicated Funding.** Support continued development of the multi-modal National Freight Network funded by a dedicated revenue stream. Freight planning is an important component of statewide, metropolitan, and local transportation planning processes. Input from a variety of public and private stakeholders—State DOTs, MPOs, freight modes, general public—must be considered to successfully integrate freight planning into these existing transportation planning processes. MPOs and local governments should be more involved in developing freight plans in conjunction with state DOTs. MPOs and local governments better understand the transportation facilities in their region and know the freight stakeholders so they can better reflect and plan for the unique needs of their regions and jurisdictions.
- 3) **Restore the Share of STBG Apportionments for Local Jurisdictions to Pre-MAP 21 Levels.** It is critical to increase the percentage of funding allocated by population under the Surface Transportation Block Grant Program (STBG). Increasing funds will allow MPO boards to make infrastructure investment decisions that will generate economic opportunities, reduce transportation accidents and fatalities, reduce congestion, and improve the quality of life for those living, commuting, and working in these areas. While the FAST Act did gradually increase the percent share of STBG that is allocated by population, the next future reauthorization bill should restore that percentage to the 62.5 percent - which was the share prior MAP-21. This calculation should be made prior to any set-asides under the program.
- 4) **Establish One Common Effective Date for Statewide and Nonmetropolitan Transportation Planning.** A key feature of MAP-21 was the establishment of a performance and outcome-based program. The objective of this performance and outcome-based program is for States and MPOs to invest resources in projects that collectively will make progress toward the achievement of the national goals. MPOs have been working diligently in the development and implementation of this new approach. The staggered rulemaking process has created a varying series of implementation dates that has led to great confusion that threatens the continuity of



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the Metropolitan 3-C process. Congress should establish a single common effective date for all MAP-21 Performance Based Planning and Programming regulations.

- 5) Improve Project Selection Authority and Local Governance on MPO Boards.** Amend Title 23 to give all MPOs decision making authority on which transportation projects should be funded in their planning areas. Currently only MPOs serving a population over 200,000 are permitted to select federally funded projects from their own list of developed and approved projects. All other MPOs' (50,000-199,999) highway projects are selected by the state in cooperation with the MPO. Amend the law to allow MPOs under 200,000 in population to select their federally funded projects unless an MPOs choose to continue with current law letting the state cooperatively select highway projects. States should be prohibited from determining the size of an MPO board or the number of voting board members.

Communities face critical challenges that can be addressed through federal funding and legislation regarding surface transportation. APA Georgia thanks you for your leadership and support and looks forward to working with you as we continue to move toward surface transportation reauthorization in 2020.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "James Summerbell". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "James" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "Summerbell".

Jim Summerbell, AICP
President, American Planning Association, Georgia

