



August 27, 2015

Dear Congressman:

Passage of a three-month extension of surface transportation funds through MAP-21 should provide the time and the impetus for the US House to develop a multi-year surface transportation authorization act with increasing funding levels. We urge you to work with your colleagues to pass legislation when congress convenes in September in time to reconcile the bill with the Senate DRIVE Act and pass a final multi-year transportation act prior to the October 29th deadline for the expiration of MAP-21.

We appreciate your support for maintaining federal funds that are critical for Minnesota's transportation system. The state relies heavily on federal dollars for the state highway construction program, new transitway lines and bus formula funds. Minnesota's economy and quality of life depend on a strong and safe transportation system. The many years of short-term extensions of federal funds have made planning more difficult and the uncertainty impacts companies trying to make business decisions.

House Transportation & Infrastructure Committee Chairman Bill Shuster has said his committee plans to produce a multi-year bill in September. We need you to support that process and work with your colleagues to facilitate passage by the House of legislation that will match up with the Senate 6-year authorization bill. The opportunity to have dependable federal funding for at least several years is a huge improvement over the possibility of yet another short-term extension of MAP-21.

The funding plan for a multi-year transportation bill rests with the Ways & Means Committee and we urge your efforts to support a plan that generates new trust fund resources to not only fill the \$15 billion per year gap between current spending levels and incoming trust fund revenues, but to ensure any multi-year bill grows surface transportation investment beyond simple inflationary adjustments.

As you develop new legislation, we urge you to consider some of the programs and policies contained in the Senate DRIVE Act, especially the emphasis on streamlining environmental processes and accelerating project delivery.

Since 1893

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We support policies that allow for better collaboration between the lead agency and the participating agencies, greater reliance on documents prepared during the planning process and flexibility in using documents prepared by agencies other than the DOT as well as adjusting for inflation the dollar thresholds for projects that qualify for Categorical Exclusions.

The creation of a new freight program should be supported by the House to target new resources to important improvements in the nation's freight system including the creation of a national highway freight network. Minnesota has already made progress in establishing a Freight Advisory Committee and developing a state freight plan and would welcome federal funds that are targeted to addressing the safety and effectiveness of our critical freight corridors.

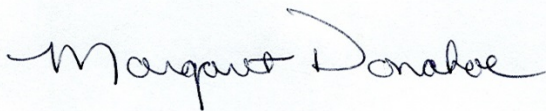
We also support the new Assistance for Major Projects program in the DRIVE Act. In particular, the role that Congressional Committees would play in approving project funding is an important step in providing more accountability and transparency in the distribution of federal funds. The project threshold in the Senate bill (\$350 million) would not allow for many Minnesota projects since the state has been working to promote high-benefit, low-cost projects so a lower minimum project cost would make the program more beneficial for Minnesota.

Other important provisions to consider are the restoration of the discretionary grant portion of the Bus and Bus Facilities program and a set-aside for off-NHS system bridges.

The need for greater investments in Minnesota's transportation system has become a top priority in our state. Local elected officials, state legislators, Governor Dayton and members of the public agree that more needs to be done to maintain and improve our aging infrastructure. Without stable federal dollars, we will have an even larger hurdle in meeting the highway, bridge and transit needs throughout the state.

Thank you for your commitment to improving the safety and effectiveness of Minnesota's transportation system. We urge you to take advantage of this opportunity, with passage by the Senate of a 6-year bill, to act quickly on a multi-year bill that can be reconciled with the Senate DRIVE Act and ultimately passed into law.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Margaret Donahoe". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "M" and a long, sweeping underline.

Margaret Donahoe
Executive Director