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May 8, 2012

The Honorable Barbara Boxer
410 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Boxer:

The American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) represents the transportation agencies in the fifty States, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. On behalf of AASHTO we recognize that in the current economic environment it has been difficult to formulate a path forward on reauthorizing the federal-aid highway, highway safety and transit programs, and we thank you for your dedication to act on these programs. As you begin conference deliberations, we recommend that you continue your commitment to key policy reforms which we believe are essential, especially given the resource constraints within which we must reauthorize the programs.

Above all, the State and local transportation agencies need the stability and certainty of a multi-year reauthorization program in order to commit to moving forward with major capital projects. We urge you to reach agreement on a surface transportation reauthorization package by the June 30th deadline of the current, ninth program extension. In addition we have a series of key issues that follow that are critical to make the best use of resources and streamline these programs.

First, implementation of key reforms must start with continued respect for the role of State and local governments in investment decisions that meet the diverse transportation needs across the country. Consolidation of federal highway and transit program categories to better focus on programs of national significance, coupled with expanded flexibility on how and where to deploy the federal surface transportation funds, will help to make more efficient and strategic use of scarce resources.

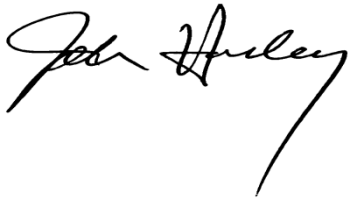
Second, with enhanced flexibility, we embrace the need for greater accountability and transparency through performance-based program management. Almost all of the State departments of transportation have implemented performance measurement and monitoring to varying degrees in safety and management of their pavement and bridge assets. Moreover, we are working with our partners at the Federal Highway and Transit Administrations,

metropolitan planning organizations and public transit agencies to develop and pilot test a framework for performance measurement and performance-based planning and programming. We urge you to avoid overly prescribing performance requirements to give the states and their partners time to reach consensus on measures and “test-drive” performance-based program management.

Third, the time it takes to move projects from concept through construction still takes much too long. We concur with efforts to further expedite project delivery, and believe that there is much room for improvement without sacrificing environmental protection. Again, with scarce resources, we need to be able to stretch every dollar by speeding up the project delivery process.

And fourth, we need to enhance our ability to leverage scarce resources with expanded options to supplement our base program with additional financial tools such as additional funding for the TIFIA credit assistance program; tax-credit bonds such as the TRIPs; enhancement of tolling; and further support for State Infrastructure Banks.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John Horsley". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping tail on the final letter.

John Horsley