

June 13, 2005

The Honorable Don Young
Chairman
Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
U.S. House of Representatives
2165 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515-6256

Dear Mr. Chairman:

As Conferees begin the work of drafting the conference report for the reauthorization of the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21), the Coalition of Northeastern Governors (CONEG) would like to reiterate key regional priorities in the current bills. The CONEG Governors urge Congress to maintain the proven needs-based structure of the highway and transit programs. The structure provided by TEA-21 has resulted in improved conditions and safety of highways, bridges and public transportation systems of the Northeast and the nation. It is vital for this legacy to continue.

We appreciate your leadership throughout the reauthorization process, and understand that in an environment of severe fiscal constraints, you face major challenges balancing the many diverse interests and demands placed upon the highway and transit programs and available funding. However, to address these essential interests, predictable long-term funding is required to tackle the nation's growing transportation needs.

As Conferees move forward on the reauthorization of surface transportation legislation, we urge you to:

- **Maintain the States' Existing Share of Highway Funding.** We urge you to retain the current program structure which distributes funds through a needs-based formula that strengthens highway safety and security, generates jobs, manages congestion, enhances road and bridge maintenance and construction and improves mobility. The Northeast's transportation system, with some of the nation's most heavily used highways and most extensive and aging system of bridges, is an integral part of a transportation network that supports the nation's economic well-being. Consistent with the needs-based approach, the existing share of highway funds received by Northeastern states should not be negatively impacted. In addition, equitable growth in funding for all states is critical in maintaining a national highway system and supporting the national economy.
- **Maintain the "Firewalls" and General Fund Guarantees for Transit.** The CONEG Governors appreciate the actions of Congress in maintaining the firewalls and General Fund guarantees for transit. These protections are essential in providing the funding predictability that states need to meet their transportation needs.

- **Protect the Transit Program.** Continuation of the General Fund guarantees and the current transit program structure – particularly the historic balance between the highway and transit programs – provides a balanced approach that is essential for funding reliability and stability for both the highway and transit programs. An adequately funded transit program is essential for both urban and rural communities in providing environmental benefits, enhanced access and mobility, as well as much needed congestion relief. Therefore, the CONEG Governors urge that no less than 18.48% of the total program be authorized for transit.
- **Provide for a Commission to Undertake a Policy Study of Future Needs and Funding of an Integrated Transportation System.** The CONEG Governors urge the creation of a Commission to undertake a policy study of the future needs and funding of a comprehensive, integrated surface transportation system that can meet the diverse demands that will be placed upon the nation's transportation system. We encourage the Congress to ensure that the policy study of future transportation needs and future revenue needs are closely coordinated.
- **Refine the Border Program.** The CONEG Governors welcome the new Border Program that distributes funding to border states under a formula. A formula that uses cargo value as a factor and allows spending throughout the state enables a state to target the resources to the areas of greatest impact. This program should continue to be funded outside the states' allocation.
- **Continue Funding for the I-95 Corridor Coalition.** The CONEG Governors urge the Congress to continue funding for the I-95 Corridor Coalition as a takedown from the Research Title. The I-95 Coalition, an alliance of transportation agencies, toll authorities, and related organizations from Maine to Florida, provides a forum for key decision and policy makers to address transportation management and operations issues of common interest.
- **Continue and Enhance Rail Programs as Part of a Comprehensive Intermodal Surface Transportation System.** The CONEG Governors urge the Congress to strengthen a number of rail programs that are valuable elements of the nation's integrated surface transportation program. These include reauthorization of an enhanced Swift High Speed Rail Development Act, an adequately funded and flexible highway-rail grade crossing program, reauthorization of an enhanced Railroad Rehabilitation and Improvement Financing (RRIF) Loan Program, and creation of a rail line relocation grant program. These modest rail programs can contribute significantly towards a safe, more seamless, and integrated transportation network.

We appreciate your continuing endeavors on this important legislation. We stand ready to work with you to complete action on a surface transportation program that addresses these priorities and encourages all states to work together to address the critical transportation needs of the nation.

Sincerely,

/o.s./

John E. Baldacci
Chair
Governor of Maine

/o.s./

Donald L. Carcieri
Vice-Chair
Governor of Rhode Island

/o.s./

George E. Pataki
Lead Governor for
Transportation
Governor of New York

Identical letters were provided to House and Senate Leadership, as well as conferees who are chairmen and ranking members of the various committee's of jurisdiction.