



May 6, 2014

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The Honorable Barbara Boxer
Chairwoman
Committee on Environment and Public Works
410 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable David Vitter
Ranking Member
Committee on Environment and Public Works
456 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairwoman Boxer and Ranking Member Vitter:

On behalf of the California State Association of Counties (CSAC), I am writing to renew our request that you prioritize funding for locally-owned bridges in the next surface transportation bill. In particular, we urge you to restore the Highway Bridge Program (HBP) as a core formula program. In the event that the HBP is not reinstated, we urge you to provide a funding set-aside for local on-system bridges and to maintain the current set-aside for off-system bridges.

As you know, bridges are a unique component of our nation's transportation system. Unlike a variety of road and pavement projects, however, many bridge projects entail complex design processes, necessitate long-term planning and procurement, and present unique construction challenges. Moreover, there is little room for error when it comes to bridge safety, as they must remain structurally sound in order to ensure that vehicles and motorists are secure.

In California, over 28 percent of local bridges are structurally deficient or functionally obsolete, meaning these structures are in poor condition due to deterioration and damage or were built to standards that are not used today. Furthermore, in some counties, the percentage of county and city-owned bridges that are in need of rehabilitation or replacement exceeds 50 percent. While the State of California and its local governments have placed an emphasis on financing bridge projects, conditions remain poor and projected repair and replacement costs stretch into the hundreds of millions of dollars.

Under MAP-21, local bridges are eligible for federal funding under the Surface Transportation Program (STP). While the Act requires states to set-aside a portion of STP dollars for *off-system* bridges, it does not provide a guaranteed funding source for local *on-system* bridges. As a result, on-system bridges - which comprise over half of California's local bridge inventory - must compete with numerous other state and local projects for limited STP funds.

Attached to this letter is a legislative proposal developed by CSAC that would create a much-needed set-aside for on-system bridges. The proposal also would maintain the current 15 percent set-aside for off-system bridges, as required by current law. We urge you to incorporate this language into your highway reauthorization bill.

On a related matter, and as you know, funding for Federal-aid highways and bridges was consolidated under MAP-21; accordingly, road and bridge projects are now primarily funded through two core programs - the National Highway Performance Program (NHPP) and STP. Notably, NHPP funds may only be used for projects on or associated with the NHS, which accounts for 23 percent of the nation's bridges and 22 percent of Federal-aid highways. The balance of projects on the nation's bridges and

highway miles - 77 percent and 78 percent, respectively - are *not* eligible for NHPP funding and must rely primarily on STP financing.

Although facilities on the NHS represent a relatively small percentage of the country's total Federal-aid highway system, the NHPP receives a funding allocation that is more than double that of STP. All told, the NHPP is funded at \$21.8 billion annually while STP receives only \$10 billion. In order to provide more equitable support for NHS/non-NHS projects, we recommend that the amount of funds that are apportioned for the NHPP and STP be changed to 46.5 percent (instead of the current 63.7 percent NHPP/29.3 percent STP split). Likewise, we urge you to revise STP sub-allocation levels to ensure that local areas receive 62.5 percent of funding (consistent with pre-MAP-21 levels), instead of the current 50 percent. These proposed modifications would help counties more adequately address the significant and growing transportation financing needs at the local level.

Thank you for your consideration of these important requests. CSAC looks forward to continuing to work with you on this and other important issues as Congress considers options for a new transportation reauthorization bill. If you have any questions or if you need any additional information, please feel free to contact Joe Krahn, CSAC Federal Representative, Waterman and Associates at (202) 898-1444, or Kiana Buss, CSAC Legislative Representative at (916) 327-7500 ext. 566.

Sincerely,



Matt Cate
CSAC Executive Director

cc: Senator Dianne Feinstein

enclosure