



STATEMENT OF

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AND

**CHAIRMAN, TRANSPORTATION STEERING COMMITTEE
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF COUNTIES**

AND

**CHAIRMAN
METROPOLITAN TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION**

ON

**MOBILITY AND CONGESTION IN URBAN AND RURAL
AMERICA**

**BEFORE THE
SENATE COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC
WORKS**

**MARCH 18, 2010
WASHINGTON, DC**

My name is Scott Haggerty. I am a member of the Board of Supervisors of Alameda County, California and serve as the Chair of the Transportation Steering Committee of the National Association of Counties (NACo^{*}). I am also the Chairman of the San Francisco Bay Area's Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC), which covers nine counties in the Bay area with a total population of over 7 million citizens.

NACo's view is that congestion in metropolitan areas is the single most important issue in American transportation today. In many metropolitan areas we have constrained mobility and increasing congestion. We know that many commuters and freight carriers traveling in or through metro regions do not know how long it will take to reach their destination. We know that the delays in these trips are costly, harm the environment, hurt America's commerce and seem to get longer each year. County governments understand congestion and recognize it is a big problem. Counties are increasingly very large jurisdictions—there are 34 counties with populations in excess of 1,000,000. Seven of the top 20 mega counties are in California. Another 76 counties are between 500,000-1,000,000. We estimate that 120 million people live in these 120 large jurisdictions. Approximately 85 percent of all traffic congestion, transit ridership, and auto-related air pollution are in our metro regions.

No place in America better reflects the challenges of mobility and congestion in both urban and rural America than Alameda County. It is home to more than 1.5 million people, and to large cities such as Oakland, Fremont and Berkeley. It is home to one of America's busiest international seaports, the Port of Oakland, and to major transit agencies such as BART and AC Transit. Alameda County suffers from the worst highway congestion in the Bay Area, which in turn is the second most congested metropolitan region in the country — behind only Los Angeles. This is a problem that we

* The National Association of Counties (NACo) is the only national organization that represents county governments in the United States. Founded in 1935, NACo provides essential services to the nation's 3,066 counties. NACo advances issues with a unified voice before the federal government, improves the public's understanding of county government, assists counties in finding and sharing innovative solutions through education and research, and provides value-added services to save counties and taxpayers money. For more information about NACo, visit www.naco.org.

quite literally cannot afford to ignore. Yet my county is also home to vast ranches, orchards and vineyards. Alameda County is a gateway not only to San Francisco but to the high-tech world of Silicon Valley, and to the agricultural bounty of the San Joaquin Valley as well. Alameda County is a member of MTC, which I currently chair. MTC is responsible for approving all transportation projects in our nine county region funded with state and federal funds.

NACo strongly urges that the reauthorization of the federal surface transportation program include the creation of a Metropolitan Mobility Program and that those regions with populations of 500,000 or more be eligible. We were pleased to see this concept included in the House reauthorization bill. The goal of this program would be to reduce and/or better manage congestion. Local government officials sitting on the Metropolitan Planning Organization would select the projects for funding and a broad-based congestion plan would be required in each metro area that includes a plan to manage freight as well as commuter traffic. While there are a variety of strategies for reducing congestion that could be funded under this new program, a Metropolitan Mobility Program needs to include capacity improvements as an eligible activity. However, before any projects are funded, there should be a clear statement with supporting data demonstrating how a project will address congestion and improve mobility.

Given that breakdowns and accidents are responsible for an estimated 50 percent of congestion, incident management should be considered a priority in the new reauthorization. An incentive grant program should be created which funds counties/metropolitan areas that implement a comprehensive incident management plan. This could lead to improved cooperation among state, county and city governments in developing agreements and strategies to quickly identify and act to remove vehicles from the roadways. This is an essential and often a less expensive approach to congestion mitigation.

We still need improvements in the transportation planning process, even if that requires more capacity and more planning funds. MPOs should have the authority to program all federal highway and transit funds coming into a metro area, not just the Surface

Transportation Program (STP) funds and the Transit Program funds. While the EPW Committee does not have jurisdiction, NACo wants to be clear that it supports a robust transit program that improves mobility, reduces congestion, conserves energy resources, limits greenhouse gases and serves the needs of underserved populations. We cannot fail to mention the nexus between transit and highways since thousands of busses do travel on roadways that are funded with programs this committee authorizes.

This would not be a NACo statement if I did not touch on rural issues. We strongly urge this committee to retain both the Federal Highway Bridge Program and the Off-System Bridge set aside. Without these programs, there is no assurance that there will be adequate investment by states and local governments in our rural transportation infrastructure. We also recommend the expansion of the High Risk Rural Road Safety Program and an enhanced rural planning process. Finally, we must improve project delivery, particularly for the many less complicated and smaller projects, through a streamlined process that does not unacceptably stretch out environmental review and the permitting process. The 90 percent of federal highway projects that receive Categorical Exclusions should have a faster and easier path to project approval and completion.

We are a decade into the 21st Century. Despite efforts at all levels of government, congestion and mobility solutions continue to challenge us. We cannot afford to continue the status quo. This completes my testimony and I would be pleased to answer questions from members of the Committee.