

To strengthen
and promote
cities as centers
of opportunity,
leadership, and
governance.



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of Cities**

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Written Testimony of

The Honorable Kathleen Novak Mayor, Northglenn, Colorado President, National League of Cities

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I am Kathleen Novak, Mayor of Northglenn, Colorado and President of the National League of Cities. NLC is the nation's oldest and largest organization devoted to strengthening and promoting cities as centers of opportunity, leadership and governance. NLC is a resource and advocate for 19,000 cities, towns and villages, representing more than 218 million Americans.

As majority owners and operators of the nearly four million-mile national roadway network; half of the nation's bridges; managers of 90 percent of the transit systems; funders of 30 percent of the nation's investment in roads, highways, and transit, local governments play a key role in ensuring that transportation investments are implemented along the national transportation goals as laid out by Congress and the Administration.

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Local governments have a large stake in this conversation. Hometown America is where investments come together with goals. We are where roads are paved and bridges built. As we look ahead to developing a national transportation system for the 21st century, we need to establish a framework that embraces a new federalism: one that empowers the best of all levels of government in the decision-making process. We need to reinvigorate the intergovernmental partnership to establish national transportation goals and priorities that meet our country's challenges.

Local governments want to work with Congress to develop a comprehensive national transportation plan that (1) strengthens our cities and towns as the centers of economic growth; (2) creates economic opportunity for all of our residents; (3) and recognizes the link between energy consumption and transportation.

As individual household investment in transportation has risen - now the second largest expense for more American households after housing according to the Brookings Institute - and as we better understand the impact transportation systems have on environmental quality, economic strength, housing and public health, all levels of government need to think comprehensively about how we ensure that all transportation investments yield a greater level of return for our residents.

When we consider future transportation investments, NLC supports federal efforts to break down silos between and within the different levels of government. For example, while Metropolitan Planning Organizations play a large and important role in bringing regions together on transportation decision making, federal programs aimed at helping communities are too often siloed with different rules, time frames, sources of funding and regulatory frameworks, that do not allow local officials to integrate these programs efficiently to better serve their communities.

NLC applauds last week's announcement by Secretaries LaHood and Donovan to link federal housing and transportation programs and looks forward to working with HUD and DOT to develop integrated planning and better coordinate these important programs. These joint efforts will make investment more productive and goals easier to attain.

Our communities will benefit greatly from the down payment Congress and the President supported in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. Transportation programs, from airports to transit to high speed rail, not only invest in our infrastructure, but also invest in our human resources through job creation.

NLC believes that transparency and accountability in decision-making can add greatly to our understanding of how best to utilize limited funding resources to meet national goals, local leaders support these principles as part of the recovery package and future surface transportation programs.

As we begin the conversation to develop a new federal transportation program, NLC supports the following principles:

- Transportation drives local economies, which drive the nation. Local leaders must be part of the decision-making process on transportation investments that best serve local needs and meet local goals;
- Federal transportation policy must be coordinated with our country's energy and environmental policies to decrease reliance on foreign oil reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and other adverse public health impacts. Policies should be more environmentally sensitive and allow local elected officials to make the decisions on how federal transportation resources are invested. For example, NLC supports the metropolitan mobility program to reduce energy consumption endorsed by the National Surface Transportation Policy and Revenue Study Commission that encourages public transportation as part of a balanced approach to metropolitan mobility;
- Federal transportation policy that reflects a balanced transportation system approach that does not favor one mode over another but allows local leaders to take a lead role in making transportation decisions that fit regional goals. This would require changes in current federal programs which silo transportation program and bias some transportation modes in favor of others;
- The federal government must provide full funding for federal transportation programs that support bridges, roads, highways, transit and Amtrak, and support funding going directly to local governments, such as funding for transit, transportation enhancements, and the Congestion Management Air Quality Program that helps reduce congestion and protect the environment;.
- While most pressing, the shortfalls in the Highway Trust Fund are only one piece of the resource constraints faced at the federal, state and local levels to fund

transportation programs. NLC supports creative, new approaches to transportation financing to reinvigorate our nation's investment in transportation infrastructure. For example, in the Denver region, our local governments supported an increase in the gas tax to fund our transportation initiatives;

- The federal government must partner with local governments to meet America's pressing infrastructure needs and to ensure we have the transportation systems that will allow us to achieve our goals for our hometowns and our nation; and
- The federal discussion must recognize the central role of transportation to metropolitan economies by taking a holistic approach to transportation decisions, such as including the local voice in planning and project selection and choosing the best mix of transportation options to fit the needs of the region.

Last week, NLC hosted local leaders from across the nation in Washington to launch a renewed intergovernmental partnership. As a symbol of that partnership, I am here today to pledge NLC's support to collaborate with you in developing a forward looking infrastructure plan that encourages economic recovery and growth. Our members are committed to working with you to help make that reality.

We are optimistic that a growing consensus of Americans have recognized it is time for a new, updated approach to our national transportation system that takes a comprehensive approach, one that recognizes the crucial impact on the environment and energy consumption while aligning transportation with other national goals. This approach must recognize the vital role of local leadership in helping to define the federal role and implement it in a way that encourages continued economic growth and vitality.

We look forward to working with the Committee as you develop a new transportation program for the 21st Century.

Thank you.