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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC WORKS

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6175

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December 8, 2008

President-elect Barack Obama
451 6th St, NW
Washington, DC 20001

Dear President-elect Obama,

With every passing day, it becomes increasingly clear that we are in the midst of the greatest economic challenge this country has faced in a generation. As Chairman of the Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works, with responsibility for infrastructure and global warming legislation, I am committed to work in partnership with you as we move forward to address this economic crisis.

America pulled itself out of the Great Depression by mobilizing to fight World War II. Now, in order to break out of this deep recession, we must also mobilize our great nation by rebuilding our infrastructure and by combating global warming. The good news is these mobilization efforts are consistent with short term job creation and long-term economic prosperity.

My Committee has begun the process of assessing America's transportation and infrastructure needs through a series of hearings and other oversight activities. I would like to share with you some of the significant findings that the Committee has made in its review of these issues:

- Substantial additional funding is needed to repair and improve our nation's infrastructure. The National Surface Transportation Policy and Revenue Study Commission found that between \$241 and \$286 billion is needed for all transportation infrastructure annually through 2020. This includes roads, bridges, transit and rail.
- The U.S. is rapidly falling behind our competitors around the world in infrastructure investments. One expert witness at a recent Environment and Public Works Committee hearing testified that China invests nearly four times more than the United States in its infrastructure, as a proportion of GDP.
- According to the American Society of Civil Engineers, traffic congestion costs the economy \$78.2 billion annually in lost productivity and wasted fuel.
- Twenty-seven percent of the Nation's 585,000 bridges are deemed structurally deficient or functionally obsolete.

- In 1982, there was only one metropolitan region where the average traveler experienced 40 or more hours of delay per year – Los Angeles. Today, that number has grown to 28 metropolitan areas in every corner of the Nation.
- U.S. investments in infrastructure have yielded returns many times their initial investments. The net rate of return from highway investment was found to be about 34 percent on average from 1949 to 2000.
- Each \$1 billion infusion of Federal-aid highway construction spending supports approximately 35,000 jobs.

In addition to infrastructure investment, another crucial component in the recipe for economic recovery is moving the nation toward energy independence. The steps we take to fight global warming – like improving energy efficiency and developing clean, renewable sources of energy like wind, solar and geothermal power – will move the nation closer to energy independence and also create millions of good jobs.

At the same time, establishing a cap and trade system for greenhouse gas pollution, as you have proposed, has the potential to provide trillions of dollars in revenue that could be used, among other things, to provide money for investment in clean energy and tax relief for American families facing economic hardship.

We know what we need to do -- accelerate our economic recovery in the short term and ensure our long-term prosperity. Investing in transportation infrastructure and working toward energy independence, while combating global warming, are initiatives that meet these goals. This plan will create good jobs, provide an immediate jolt to the economy, and enhance our long term competitiveness.

I could not agree more with Thomas Friedman's statement in his new book, *Hot, Flat and Crowded*, when he said, "...the ability to develop clean power and energy efficient technologies is going to become the defining measure of a country's economic standing, environmental health, energy security, and national security over the next 50 years."

Mr. President-elect, I have heard you make the commitment many times to rebuild our nation's infrastructure and to fight global warming. The time is now. I believe we should do all of this in an economic recovery program, and I look forward to working with you every step of the way.

Sincerely,



Barbara Boxer
Chairman