



July 18, 2006

The Honorable James Jeffords  
Ranking Member, Committee on Environment and Public Works  
456 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510-6175

Dear Senator Jeffords,

This letter is in reference to HR 5689 (SAFETEA-LU Technical Corrections Act of 2006), which is scheduled for a markup in the Committee on Environment and Public Works over the coming weeks. The National Association of Regional Councils (NARC), in support of its member Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) and Councils of Government (COGs), is pleased that a technical corrections act is being considered by the Congress. NARC believes that HR 5689 makes several important changes to SAFETEA-LU, and encourages you and your colleagues to retain the language found in the House-approved version of the bill.

NARC strongly supports the following provisions which are found in the bill passed by the House:

- **Section 4** will allow for areas with fewer than 5,000 people to spend Surface Transportation Program funds on minor "collector" roads. This funding stream is invaluable to our nation's rural areas, where better roads can mean the difference between economic development and stagnation. This exception was allowed for 14 years under TEA-21 and ISTEA.
- **Section 7 (a)** will boost the minimum guaranteed amount of highway safety funding for the smallest and most rural states—which often have the most dangerous roads.
- **Section 11 (d)** will tighten the definition of projects eligible for an 80% Federal share of rural transit funding. The current language of "for any purpose other than operating assistance" leaves open the possibility of Federal money being spent on projects with little or no relation to providing transit service. NARC supports the new definition of "for a capital project" because it promotes responsible use of scarce transportation funds while still supporting the mission of the nation's rural transit service providers.
- **Sections 14 and 15** will provide a much-needed infusion of funds into the research programs of USDOT. These funds will allow a number of important projects to be undertaken, including data-gathering projects that help MPOs and COGs to plan for new road capacity and spend our transportation dollars efficiently. An example of a project that is presently without funding is the National Household Travel Survey (NHTS), which has been collected every 7 years since 1969 and is the *only source* of national data on household travel. It provides invaluable information on non-work trips and special needs populations like younger drivers. Sections 14 and 15 of HR 5689 would free up the funding that USDOT needs to implement the NHTS and dozens of other worthy projects.

As you are aware, it has been nearly a year since the passage of SAFETEA-LU. The process for the next reauthorization will begin in early 2007. Now is an appropriate time for Congress to approve this technical corrections bill. It is NARC's hope that the Environment and Public Works Committee and the full Senate will adopt a SAFETEA-LU Technical Corrections bill as quickly as possible. If NARC can be of any assistance to you or your staff, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely,

Cameron Moore  
Executive Director