

CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

R. BRUCE JOSTEN
EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT
GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS

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WASHINGTON, D.C. 20062-2000
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February 1, 2012

The Honorable John Mica
Chairman
Committee on Transportation and
Infrastructure
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Nick Rahall
Ranking Member
Committee on Transportation and
Infrastructure
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Mica and Ranking Member Rahall:

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the world's largest business federation representing the interests of more than three million members and organizations of every size, sector, and region, applauds the introduction of legislation providing the long-term reauthorization and reform of transportation programs.

This legislation, part of H.R. 7, the "American Energy and Infrastructure Jobs Act of 2012," is a crucial step toward a multi-year surface transportation bill that reforms surface transportation programs and, at a minimum, maintains funding for highways, public transportation and safety at current services levels.

The Chamber is pleased that the transportation reauthorization proposal, as introduced, would address the Chamber's priorities outlined in the "[U.S. Chamber of Commerce Policy Statement on SAFETEA-LU Reauthorization](#)." Among those priorities are:

- Modernization and maintenance of highway, transit and intermodal assets identified as being in the national interest;
- Continuing a federal role in enduring a comprehensive, results-oriented approach to safety;
- Focusing on freight to ensure adequate capacity, reduce congestion and increase throughput at key choke points;
- Supporting congestion mitigation and improved mobility in urban areas;
- Supporting rural connectivity to major economic and population centers;
- Speeding project delivery;
- Consolidating and simplifying the federal program structure;
- Increasing accountability for investment of public funds and expanding performance management; and
- Supporting research and development toward application of improved technologies.

Further, the bill would increase the authorization for the Transportation Infrastructure Financing and Innovation Act (TIFIA) program, which would expand the capacity of the federal government to act as a low-cost financing partner. This role has been identified by the private sector as important for encouraging public-private partnerships in transportation. However, public-private partnerships and expanded private sector investment in highways and public transportation is not a substitute for direct federal funds.

We are particularly pleased that the proposal maintains highway, public transportation and safety funding. The Chamber strongly recommends using FY2011 appropriations as the baseline for the bill, and, at a minimum, maintaining current services (adjusting for inflation). The Chamber encourages your Committee to work with members of the House Committee on Ways and Means to identify revenues for the Highway Trust Fund needed to support the authorizations and obligation limitations that would be provided in H.R. 7.

The Chamber still believes that the necessary revenues should come from a user-fee based source structured to ensure that the purchasing power of revenue sources keeps pace with inflation and is sustainable and predictable. The Chamber recognizes the current prospects are limited for such an approach. Therefore, the Chamber believes general fund resources may be necessary to fund this proposal and move forward with a multi-year bill containing much-needed policy and funding certainty for the states, locals and the private sector as provided in this legislation. The Chamber further encourages the Committee to establish a road map for a long-term sustainable user-fee based revenue model in the final legislation.

Finally, the Chamber encourages the Committee to include provisions to increase investment in the nation's waterways and ports by ensuring that Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund revenues are used fully for their intended purposes. Making available to the Army Corps of Engineers annual revenue deposited into the Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund for critical harbor and channel maintenance and dredging each budget and appropriations cycle is critical for supporting U.S. exports and other goods movement.

The introduction and markup of the transportation investment and reform portions of H.R. 7 is a positive development. Investment in transportation has proven to grow jobs – the need for Congress to act on transportation infrastructure is clear. Passing transportation reauthorization legislation is a specific action Congress and the Administration can take right now to support job growth and economic productivity without adding to the deficit. The Chamber urges the Committee to report the surface transportation provisions favorably so that the House can move to consideration of H.R. 7 in the near term.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "R. Bruce Josten", written in a cursive style.

R. Bruce Josten

cc: Members of the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure