December 22, 2008

The Honorable Harry Reid
Majority Leader
The U.S. Capitol
Room S-221
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
The U.S. Capitol
Room S-230
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
The U.S. Capitol
Room H-232
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable John A. Boehner
Minority Leader
The U.S. Capitol
Room H-204
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Leaders:

On behalf of the nation’s local elected officials, we are writing to express our support for economic recovery highway funding to flow quickly and directly to existing recipients: state departments of transportation and metropolitan planning organizations. This is accomplished by directing funds to the Surface Transportation Program (STP). This ensures maximum flexibility to cities, counties, and to states to undertake bridge, bus and rail, and road projects by dividing funds between the states (37.5%) and local areas (62.5%), as current law has provided since 1991.

Our recommendation does not take funding away from the states. Using STP means that, in addition to a guaranteed share of STP funds reserved for states, local areas also receive a share of funds. This guarantees accountability given current requirements set forth in the federal law. Without STP allocation, metro areas and rural communities have no assurances that they will actually get any funds.

The majority of local government associations, including the National Association of Counties, U.S. Conference of Mayors, National League of Cities, National Association of Regional Councils, and American Public Works Association, have surveyed their
members regarding “ready to go” projects. These projects can be completed by the end of 2010, if not before.

Collectively, we represent the interests of almost every municipality or county government in the United States and strongly urge that current-law commitments to local areas are preserved in distributing funds in the economic recovery package.

Sincerely,

Tom Cochran
United States Conference of Mayors

Fred Abousleman
National Association of Regional Councils

Donald Borut
National League of Cities

Matthew Chase
National Association of Development Organizations

Larry Naake
National Association of Counties

W. Paul Farmer
American Planning Association

DeLania Hardy
Association of Metropolitan Planning Association

Peter King
American Public Works Association