The transportation authorization bill is a top priority for the United States. We are struggling to balance pressing infrastructure needs while strengthening our nation’s economy. These two critical issues overlap in many ways.

The Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations (“AMPO”) writes regarding our serious concerns about the future of smaller metropolitan planning organizations (“MPO”). AMPO represents MPOs across the United States, of which there are 385 ranging in designated population size of 50,000 to several million.

As Congress debates the reauthorization of surface transportation legislation, we would like to remind you that it has been AMPO’s policy recommendation to retain all existing MPOs under 200,000 in population regardless of any new MPO threshold designation changes that may be included in legislation. While we agree that certain changes in law may be needed to improve the planning process, all existing small MPOs must remain in operation to continue their critical roles in decision-making.

- **Local elected officials are the MPO.** Removing the decision-making authorities from the local level will take away the voice of the local government, its citizens, and people in the regions. Citizens elect their local public officials to reflect the unique nature of their region.

- **Citizens and voters need to be heard and participate in transportation decisions that impact their daily lives.** Removing the MPOs’ connection to public participation will lead to decisions made without actual citizen involvement. It will only increase the distance between the average citizen and the policy-maker.

- **Should Congress elect to change the population threshold without including grandfather provisions, States will lose MPOs.** In fact, with the possible elimination of MPOs in areas with populations lower than 200,000, 8 states potentially will not have a MPO. In all, the 200,000 threshold would eliminate approximately 220 of the 385 MPOs. Some current MPOs have existed since 1962. Decades of an open table for the operators, public agencies, state officials, local electeds and citizens will disappear.

As required under U.S. Code Title 23, Chapter 1, Section 134, MPOs are policy boards comprised of local elected officials, representatives of public agencies that administer or operate transportation modes and state officials. The boards are responsible for carrying out federally required transportation planning activities that include, but are not limited to, development of long-term multimodal transportation...
plans, coordinated selection of transportation improvements in a fiscally constrained manner, public outreach, and coordination with states and numerous public and citizen interests.

With current economic realities, these transportation decisions and investments are critical to economic growth, our citizens, and the nation’s financial engines, which are tied to metropolitan regions of all sizes. Given the importance of transportation infrastructure to economic growth, security, and sustainability, MPOs are an inextricable part of the U.S. economy.

AMPO has provided Congress with legislative language that would grandfather existing MPOs from designation changes. If you would like to receive a copy of this draft legislative provision please feel free to contact DeLania Hardy, Executive Director, Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations at 202-296-7051, or dhardy@ampo.org. Thank you for your time and consideration of this important issue.

The following signatories support AMPO’s position on grandfathering existing MPOs:

Sincerely,

DeLania Hardy
Executive Director, AMPO

Enclosures
7/11/11
Alabama

Bill Curtis  
*Executive Director*  
East Alabama Regional Planning and Development Commission, Anniston

Thomas B. Solomon  
*Executive Director*  
Southeast Alabama Regional Planning and Development Commission, Dothan

Suzanne G. Burnette  
*Executive Director*  
Keith M. Bryan  
*Transportation Planner / GIS Coordinator*  
Lee-Russell Council of Governments, Opelika

Arizona

Kevin Adam  
*Rural Transportation Liaison*  
Rural Transportation Advocacy Council (Arizona)

Kenneth Sweet  
*Executive Director*  
Northern Arizona Council of Governments, Flagstaff

David Wessel  
*Manager*  
Flagstaff MPO, Flagstaff

Charlene FitzGerald  
*Executive Director*  
Yuma Metropolitan Planning Organization, Yuma

Arkansas

Tim Conklin, AICP  
*MPO Director*  
Bi-State MPO, Fort Smith

John Guthrie  
*Executive Director*  
Western Arkansas Planning & Development District, Inc., Fort Smith
Dianne Morrison, AICP  
*MPO Study Director*  
City of Hot Springs/MPO Department, Hot Springs

Muhammad Amin Ulkarim  
*Transportation Planning Director*  
Jonesboro MPO, Jonesboro

Hon. Tab Townsell  
*Mayor of Conway*  
Jim McKenzie  
*Executive Director*  
Metroplan, Little Rock

Jeff Hawkins  
*Executive Director*  
Northwest Arkansas Regional Planning Commission, Springdale

**Colorado**

Scott Hobson  
*Assistant City Manager for Community Investment/MPO Manager*  
Pueblo Area Council of Government, Pueblo

**Florida**

Howard Glassman  
*Executive Director*  
Florida MPO Advisory Council, Tallahassee

Raymond Chiaramonte, AICP  
*Executive Director*  
Hillsborough County MPO, Tampa

**Georgia**

James P. Thomas  
*Executive Director*  
Macon-Bibb Planning and Zoning Commission, Macon

Thomas L. Thomson, PE, AICP  
*Executive Director*  
Chatham County-Savannah MPO, Savannah

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Idaho

Matthew J. Stoll
*Executive Director*
Community Planning Association of Southwest Idaho (COMPASS), Boise

Darrell West
*MPO Director*
Bonneville MPO, Idaho Falls

Illinois

Paul Russell, AICP
*Executive Director*
McLean County Regional Planning Commission, Bloomington

Donald Kopec
*Executive Director*
Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, Chicago

Joel Maurer
*Director*
DeKalb-Sycamore Area Transportation Study, DeKalb

Linda Wheeland
*Senior Transportation Planner*
Springfield Area Transportation Study, Springfield

Iowa

Doug Elliott
*Executive Director*
East Central Iowa Council of Governments, Cedar Rapids

Kelley Hutton Deutmeyer
*Executive Director*
East Central Intergovernmental Association, Dubuque

Kevin Blanshan
*Director of Transportation and Data Services*
Iowa Northland Regional Council of Governments, Waterloo
Black Hawk County Metropolitan Area Transportation Policy Board
Sharon Juon
*Executive Director*
Iowa Northland Regional Council of Governments, Waterloo

**Kentucky**

Harry L. Berry
*Chairman*
Mike Skaggs
*Transportation Planner*
Radcliff/Elizabethtown MPO, Elizabethtown

Wendell Lawrence
*Executive Director*
Lincoln Trail Area Development District, Elizabethtown

Terri Burgess Sicking
*MPO Planner*
Ashland Area MPO
Five County Area Development District, Grayson

Chris Sutton
*Executive Director*
Pennyryl Area Development District, Hopkinsville

Lenny Stoltz II
*Executive Director*
Bluegrass Area Development District, Lexington

Jiten Shah
*Executive Director*
Green River Area Development District, Owensboro

**Louisiana**

Kevin Belanger
*CEO*
South Central Planning and Development Commission, Houma

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Maine

Robert J. Thompson
*Executive Director*
Androscoggin Valley Council of Governments, Auburn/Lewiston

Michael W. Aube
*President*
Eastern Maine Development Corporation, Bangor

Rob Kenerson
*BACTS Director*
Bangor Area Comprehensive Transportation System, Bangor

Neal W. Allen
*Executive Director*
Greater Portland Council of Governments, Portland

John Duncan
*Executive Director*
Portland Area Comprehensive Transportation System, Portland

Paul Schumacher
*Executive Director*
Southern Maine Regional Planning Commission, Springvale

Michigan

Elisa Hoekwater
*Senior Planner*
Macatawa Area Coordinating Council, Holland

Sandeep Dey
*Executive Director*
West Michigan Shoreline Regional Development Commission
Muskegon/Northern Ottawa MPO, Muskegon

Douglas A. Bell, AICP
*Director*
Saginaw Metropolitan Area Transportation Study
Saginaw County Metropolitan Planning Commission, Saginaw
Minnesota

Ron Chicka, AICP
Director
Duluth – Superior Metropolitan Interstate Council, Duluth

Scott M. Mareck, AICP
Executive Director
St. Cloud Area Planning Organization, St. Cloud

Cheryal Lee Hills
Executive Director
Region Five Development Commission, Staples

Missouri

Johnny Murrell
Executive Director
South Central Ozark Council of Governments, Pomona

New Hampshire

David J. Preece, AICP
Executive Director and CEO
Southern New Hampshire Planning Commission/ MPO, Manchester

Cynthia Copeland, AICP
Executive Director
Strafford Regional Planning Commission, Rochester

New Mexico

Joe Delmagori
MPO Planner
Farmington MPO, Farmington

Jeff Kiely
Executive Director
Northwest New Mexico Council of Governments, Gallup/Farmington

Tom Murphy, AICP
MPO Officer
Las Cruces MPO, Las Cruces

…the transportation advocate for metropolitan regions…
committed to enhancing MPOs’ abilities to improve metropolitan transportation systems…
New York

Cynthia M. Paddick  
*Executive Director*  
Binghamton Metropolitan Transportation Study, Binghamton

Jay Schissell  
*Director*  
Elmira-Chemung Transportation Council, Elmira

Aaron Frankenfeld, PTP  
*Director*  
Adirondack / Glens Falls Transportation Council, Glen Falls

Herb Engman  
*Supervisor of the Town of Ithaca*  
Ithaca-Tompkins County Transportation Council, Ithaca

Nevada

Patrick Pittenger, AICP, PTP  
*Transportation Manager*  
Carson Area MPO, Carson City

Nick Haven  
*Transportation Team Leader*  
Tahoe MPO, Stateline

North Carolina

Betty Huskins  
*Executive Director*  
North Carolina Association of Regional Councils

Mike Nunn  
*MPO Director*  
Burlington Graham MPO, Burlington

Phil Conrad, AICP  
*Executive Director*  
Cabarrus-Rowan MPO, Concord
Tyler Meyer, AICP  
*Transportation Planning Division Manager*  
Greensboro Department of Transportation, Greensboro

John Marshall  
*WPCOG Planning Director*  
Greater Hickory MPO, Hickory

Anthony Prinz  
*MPO Administrator*  
City of Jacksonville/Jacksonville MPO, Jacksonville

Bob League, AICP  
*Principal Transportation Planner*  
Rocky Mount Urban Area MPO, Rocky Mount

Mike Kozlosky  
*Executive Director*  
Wilmington MPO, Wilmington

**North Dakota**

Carl Hokenstad, AICP  
*Director, Community Development Department*  
Bismarck-Mandan MPO, Bismarck

Wade E. Kline  
*Executive Director*  
FM Metropolitan Council of Governments, Fargo

Earl Haugen  
*Executive Director*  
Grand Forks – East Grand Forks MPO, Grand Forks ND and East Grand Forks MN

**Ohio**

Sandra Mapel, PE  
*Technical Study Director*  
Licking County Area Transportation Study, Newark

John C. Brown, AICP  
*Executive Director*  
Brooke-Hancock-Jefferson MPO, Steubenville

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Oregon

Michael G. Quilty
Chair
Rogue Valley MPO, Central Point

South Carolina

Frances M. Thomas
Planning Manager/RFATS Administrator
Rock Hill-Fort Mill Area Transportation Study, Rock Hill

Tennessee

Terrence J. Bobrowski
Executive Director
East Tennessee Development District, Alcoa

Stan Williams
MPO Director
Clarksville MPO, Clarksville

Hon. Tom Rowland
Mayor of Cleveland
Cleveland Urban Area MPO, Cleveland

Chris Campbell, AICP
Coordinator
Kingsport MPO, Kingsport

Pamela D. Marshall
Executive Director
Memphis Area Association of Governments, Memphis

Rich DesGroseilliers, GISP
Coordinator
Lakeway Area Metropolitan Transportation Planning Organization, Morristown

Texas

Gary Holwick
MPO Director
Amarillo MPO, Amarillo
Rebeca Castillo
*MPO Director*
Harlingen-San Benito MPO, Harlingen

Allen Clark
*Director of Transportation Planning*
Houston-Galveston MPO, Houston

Karen Owen
*Director*
Longview MPO, Longview

Hon. Bill Magers
*Mayor of Sherman and MPO President*
Robert Wood
*Director*
Sherman - Denison MPO, Sherman

James McCaleb
*Executive Director*
Texarkana MPO, Texarkana

Hon. Barbara Bass
*Mayor of Tyler*
Tyler Area MPO, Tyler

Christopher Evilia, AICP
*Director*
Waco MPO, Waco

Utah

James P. Gass
*Executive Director*
Cache MPO, Logan

Vermont

Thomas J Kennedy, AICP
*Executive Director*
Southern Windsor County Regional Planning Commission, Ascutney

Michele Boomhower
*Executive Director*
Chittenden County MPO, Burlington

*...the transportation advocate for metropolitan regions…*
*committed to enhancing MPOs’ abilities to improve metropolitan transportation systems…*
Virginia

Dan Brugh
Executive Director
Blacksburg, Christiansburg, Montgomery Area MPO, Blacksburg

Chris Starnes
Transportation Planning Manager
LENOWISCO Planning District Commission, Duffield
Kingsport MPO (TN/VA)

Lloyd Robinson
Director Transportation Planning
Fredericksburg Area MPO, Fredericksburg

Washington

Steve Harvey
Director
Cowlitz-Wahkiakum COG, Kelso

Lon D. Wyrick
Executive Director
Thurston Regional Planning Council, Olympia

Gwen Luper
Executive Director
Mark Kushner
Transportation Director
Benton-Franklin COG, Richland

Charlie Howard
Transportation Planning Director
Puget Sound Regional Council, Seattle

Jeff Wilkens
Executive Director
Wenatchee Valley Transportation Council, Wenatchee

J. Page Scott
Executive Director
Yakima Valley Conference of Governments, Yakima

...the transportation advocate for metropolitan regions... committed to enhancing MPOs' abilities to improve metropolitan transportation systems...
West Virginia

Mark Felton
*Executive Director*
Regional Intergovernmental Council
(MPO for Charleston, WV), Charleston

Michele Prestera Craig
*Executive Director*
Saleem Salameh, PE, M.ASCE
*Technical Study Director/Transportation Engineer*
KYOVA Interstate Planning Commission, Huntington

James P. Mylott
*Executive Director*
Mid-Ohio Valley Regional Council, Parkersburg

Bob Muransky
*Transportation Study Director*
Bel-O-Mar Regional Council, Wheeling

Mallie Combs
*Executive Director*
Hardy County Rural Development Authority, Moorefield

Wisconsin

Jay B. Tappen
*Executive Director*
Chippewa-Eau Claire MPO, Eau Claire

Duane Cherek
*Acting Director*
Janesville Area MPO, Janesville

Tom Faella
*Executive Director*
La Crosse Area Planning Committee, La Cross
Walt Raith  
*Assistant Director/MPO Director*  
East Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission, Menasha  

Richard Heath  
*Executive Director*  
Bay-Lake Regional Planning Commission, Sheboygan  

**Wyoming**  

Tom Mason  
*Director*  
Cheyenne MPO, Cheyenne