TESTIMONY OF

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BEFORE THE

UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON HIGHWAYS AND TRANSIT

ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION
“SURFACE TRANSPORTATION REAUTHORIZATION: PERSPECTIVES OF THE NON-FEDERAL PARTNERS”

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Chairman Petri, Ranking Democrat Holmes-Norton, and members of the committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today. My name is DeLania Hardy and I am the Executive Director of the Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations (AMPO). AMPO is the transportation advocate for metropolitan regions and is committed to enhancing MPOs' abilities to improve metropolitan transportation systems. Federal transportation law requires that urbanized areas with a population of 50,000 or higher, as defined by the Census Bureau, be served by an MPO. Currently, there are about 408 MPOs with several more in the process of being formed, based on the 2010 Census. As defined in title 23 of the US Code, an MPO is the policy board of an organization, established as a result of the designation process. The designation requires an agreement between the governor and local governments that together represent 75 percent of the affected population. An MPO board consists of local elected officials, officials of public agencies that operate major modes of transportation in the metro area, including providers of public transportation, and appropriate state officials with respective roles. Policy and operational decisions made by the board are done so in a cooperative, continuous,
and comprehensive basis, known as the 3Cs. MPOs are required to carry out the planning process under federal law, which include the development of a 20-year long-range plan (LRP) and a transportation improvement program (TIP). The development of the LRP is an inclusive process, requiring outreach to the citizenry and stakeholders, federally established planning factors, and reflects metropolitan priorities. The TIP reflects the investment priorities consistent with the plan.

**MPO PLANNING FUNDS**

In 2014, FHWA provides roughly $320 million and FTA provides roughly $130 million for metropolitan planning. Federal planning funds are apportioned to the States and allocated to individual MPOs within each State based on a formula agreed to by the State and the MPOs. Consistent with the federal program, planning funds are provided to the State and then the MPOs are reimbursed.

**SURFACE TRANSPORTATION PROGRAM**

Under federal law, the Secretary identifies each urbanized area with a population over 200,000 as a transportation management area (TMA). TMAs are eligible for suballocated Surface Transportation Program (STP) funds that the MPO uses to
select eligible projects. The State will continue managing the funds from the federal
government, but it is required to obligate these funds in the metropolitan area.

MAP-21

AMPO and its members thank the Committee for preserving the relationship we
have with our partners at the State level, as well as, public transit operators. We
also thank you for maintaining the MPO planning process in all urbanized areas.

MAP-21 included several new policy provisions for MPOs. While not new to MPOs,
performance based planning will now be a requirement of all MPOs as part of their
planning process. In an urbanized area with a population over one million and in a
nonattainment or maintenance area, MPOs are required to develop a performance
plan to address traffic congestion and emissions under the Congestion Mitigation
and Air Quality (CMAQ) program. AMPO and our members have been working
closely with USDOT and other transportation stakeholders to provide input on these
and other future rulemakings. AMPO has communicated to USDOT that
transportation performance measures must be tied in to the Statewide and
Metropolitan transportation-planning rule that is also nearing its release for
comment to ensure consistency across the planning community. We look forward to the release of all these proposed rules in the next few weeks.

**Reauthorization**

Lastly, I will briefly go through AMPO’s recommendations for the next surface transportation bill. Our number one recommendation is that Congress address the near-term and long-term health of the Highway Trust Fund to prevent any delay in reimbursements to States, which ultimately impacts transportation investments in metropolitan planning areas.

We recommend a bill of four to six years in length. This would represent a major step in providing funding certainty and allow for long-term planning and implementation of projects.

AMPO believes that moving forward, as MPOs’ responsibilities and authorities are expanded, appropriate funding be provided. With the pending regulatory framework and requirements under MAP-21, transportation performance measures will require additional resources to achieve the goals and expectations of MAP-21.

The current funding program structure does not provide requisite authority to fully
meet these increased responsibilities as the vast majority of funding is apportioned
directly to States. States then choose how much of their apportionments are
allocated for programming within areas covered by an MPO, and this decision need
not be made based on any agreed-upon formulas. As such, funds that States receive
based on the condition and performance of the system in an area covered by an
MPO may not be allocated to that respective MPO.

AMPO recommends expanding MPO programming authority through increased
direct apportionment or suballocation. Some options include:

• Establishing a Metropolitan Mobility Program,
• Initiate direct suballocation of the National Highway Performance Program,
• Increase direct suballocation of STP, and
• Regarding freight, MPOs would like the authority to designate critical urban
  freight corridors.
AMPO has long recognized the importance of moving freight throughout the country and we recommend that the cap on the number of centerline miles used to designate the primary freight network be removed to reflect a more accurate accounting of the primary freight network. Congress should establish a designation process, parallel to the Critical Rural Freight Corridors, that directs MPOs to designate critical urban freight routes. Based on the FHWA draft highway primary network, it becomes evident 27,000 to 30,000 miles will likely not be enough to cover the entirety of a system. Many highway freight bottlenecks and chokepoints are located in urban areas as first and last mile connectors, making urban areas critical to the efficiency of domestic and international supply chains. Current law lacks a process for designating critical urban freight routes to address connectivity to urban areas. Finally, AMPO recommends that the next surface transportation bill specifically address the freight needs of border communities. The freight infrastructure needs in these areas are crucial, since many of them are the frontlines of freight traffic.
Again, thank you for this opportunity to provide our thoughts on the next surface transportation bill. I will be happy to answer any questions you may have.