



ASSOCIATION OF
METROPOLITAN
PLANNING
ORGANIZATIONS

AMERICAN ASSOCIATION
OF STATE HIGHWAY AND
TRANSPORTATION OFFICIALS

AASHTO

February 7, 2018

The Hon. Thad Cochran, Chairman
The Hon. Patrick Leahy, Vice Chairman
The US Senate Appropriations Committee
Room S-128
The Capitol Washington, D.C. 20510

The Hon. Rodney Frelinghuysen, Chairman
The Hon. Nita Lowey, Ranking Member
The US House of Representatives Committee
on Appropriations
Room H-305
The Capitol Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Cochran, Vice Chairman Leahy, Chairman Frelinghuysen, and Ranking Member Lowey:

On behalf of the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) and the Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations (AMPO) we write to express our support for legislative and administrative initiatives that ensure the U.S. Census Bureau can complete a full and accurate population count during the 2020 Census.

AASHTO is a nonprofit, nonpartisan association representing the state transportation departments in the 50 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico. It represents the departments with respect to all five transportation modes: air, highways, public transportation, rail, and water. Its primary goal is to foster the development, operation, and maintenance of an integrated national transportation system. Our members work closely with U.S. Department of Transportation (U.S. DOT) agencies to operate, maintain, and improve the nation's transportation system.

AMPO is a nonprofit, nonpartisan membership organization established in 1994 to serve the needs and interests of metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs) nationwide. Federal highway and transit statutes require, as a condition for spending federal highway or transit funds in urbanized areas, the designation of MPOs, which have responsibility for planning, programming and coordinating federal highway and transit investments. AMPO offers its member MPOs technical assistance and training, conferences and workshops, frequent print and electronic communications, research, a forum for transportation policy development and coalition building, and a variety of other services.

Since the passing of the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP-21), AASHTO and AMPO have been working diligently with their members and U.S. DOT to ensure that the performance-based planning framework established by Congress in MAP-21 and defined by U.S. DOT through the recently finalized performance measures is successfully implemented and integrated into the transportation planning and programming process.

The intent of establishing a performance-based approach is to ensure that the project selection process is data-driven and accountable. Together, MPOs and State Departments of Transportation (State DOTs) plan, maintain, and operate much of the the nation's transportation network. As part of this process, MPOs and State DOTs develop federally required transportation plans and products using census data on employment, housing, and demographics to inform the selection of future transportation projects. In doing so, the MPOs and State DOTs seek to deliver a high-quality transportation network that is safe, reliable, and accessible for all.

The 2020 Census data and the subsequent American Community Survey (ACS) will provide critical information that allows for MPOs and State DOTs to make informed decisions about the future of our nation's transportation network. Inadequate 2020 Census data would undermine our members' ability to make informed performance-based investment decisions for years to come.

As Congress develops the Fiscal Year 2018 and Fiscal Year 2019 Budgets, we urge you to provide the U.S. Census Bureau with the resources needed to conduct a full and accurate population count during the 2020 Census. While we are supportive of efforts to modernize the Census in ways that could provide potential cost savings, increase participation, and improve data quality, accurate information is critical in our efforts to deliver a high-quality transportation network that is safe, reliable, and accessible for all.

Thank you for your consideration on this important issue. Should you have any questions, please contact: Penelope Weinberger from AASHTO at 202-624-3556, or Bill Keyrouze from AMPO at 202-624-3680.

Sincerely,



Frederick G. "Bud" Wright
Executive Director
AASHTO



DeLania Hardy
Executive Director
AMPO