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Guiding Principles on Surface Transportation

State and local elected officials believe that a commitment to surface transportation at all levels of government is necessary and that each level has a crucial role to play to achieve overall success.

As Congress and the administration move forward to develop a new federal vision for surface transportation, many credible and influential voices will offer counsel and advocate for particulars. State and local governments, however, are the owners and operators of 97 percent of the nation's interconnected surface transportation systems. We contribute nearly 75 percent of the annual cost to operate and maintain those systems. Moreover, with our elected partners at the federal level, as elected officials in the executive and legislative branches of state and local government, we serve the same constituencies.

We believe that surface transportation infrastructure requires both a long-term vision and funding stability to provide for our nation's diverse mobility needs. We believe a highway, bridge, safety and transit program must be developed for the future that focuses on reliability, system preservation, innovative solutions and partnerships. An improved system of project delivery, flexibility and improved accountability will contribute to a better federal program. The structural deficit in the federal Highway Trust Fund, worsening congestion, rapidly expanding freight movement and resulting delays, and concerns about assuring rural access and connectivity underscore the need to develop fresh solutions soon.

The following policy principles represent common ground on surface transportation among our respective national organizations. This consensus, however, upholds each organization's flexibility to advocate different approaches to get there given our respective diversity.

- **Funding and Finance.** State and local elected officials support the continuation of the "user pays" principle to guide transportation funding. All options must be on the table for evaluation, such as tolling and public-private partnership agreements, because we need adequate and reliable sources of revenue to supplement existing motor fuels and sales taxes

that currently fund the Highway Trust Fund. We oppose federal limits and conditions on sub-federal authority over demand-side strategies such as tolling and public-private partnership agreements.

- **Certainty and Stability.** State and local elected officials support federal funding mechanisms designed to maintain reliable, long-term funding certainty. The ability of state and local governments to engage in long-term, multi-year projects that respond to interstate commerce transport needs hinges on predictable levels of federal funding over several years.
- **Program Reforms.** State and local elected officials support preservation of core federal surface transportation programs, but recognize the need for program reforms. We oppose earmarking that cuts into funding for those core programs. We encourage new and innovative programs to improve freight movement. State and local elected officials support maximum federal surface transportation program and funding flexibility given our diversity of geography, population, and priorities.
- **Project Delivery.** State and local elected officials encourage federal efforts to streamline project delivery that reduces project approval and completion time and improve efficiencies while preserving the intent underlying critical environmental, planning and design, and procurement reviews.
- **Metropolitan and Non-metropolitan Mobility Needs.** State and local elected officials support a strong federal role in funding transportation solutions for metropolitan and non-metropolitan areas across the country. We acknowledge that congestion mitigation efforts are essential to improve the efficient movement of people and products, improve overall quality of life, and strengthen U.S. economic competitiveness. The design and execution of congestion relief efforts must provide sufficient flexibility because fixed and variable conditions associated with geography, density, and population creates unique environments throughout the nation's metropolitan and non-metropolitan areas that demand tailored strategies. At the same time, the federal program must focus resources in non-metropolitan regions to address access and connectivity needs, safety on non-metropolitan roads and

highways, the conditions of on and off-system bridges and the increasing demand for transit solutions in these communities.

- **System Performance.** State and local elected officials support outcome-oriented performance measures developed by states and localities that are clear, measurable and fair. We encourage federal incentives to reward positive outcomes in areas like congestion mitigation and safety, and oppose prescriptive federal policies focusing on preemption and unfunded mandates.
- **Safety and Security.** All levels of government must cooperate to improve the safety and mobility of the surface transportation system, protect the environment, and ensure the security of transportation assets throughout the country. We oppose the use of federal sanctions and monetary penalties to enforce federal safety standards.

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Founded in 1908, the National Governors Association (NGA) is the collective voice of the nation's governors and one of Washington, D.C.'s most respected public policy organizations. Its members are the governors of the 50 states, three territories and two commonwealths. NGA provides governors and their senior staff members with services that range from representing states on Capitol Hill and before the Administration on key federal issues to developing and implementing innovative solutions to public policy challenges through the NGA Center for Best Practices. For more information, go to www.nga.org.

NCSL is a bipartisan organization that serves the legislators and staffs of the states, commonwealths and territories. It provides research, technical assistance and opportunities for policymakers to exchange ideas on the most pressing state issues and is an effective and respected advocate for the interests of the states in the American federal system. For more information, go to www.ncsl.org.

The National Association of Counties (NACo) is the only national organization that represents county governments in the United States. Founded in 1935, NACo provides essential services to the nation's 3,068 counties. NACo advances issues with a unified voice before the federal government, improves the public's understanding of county government, assists counties in finding and sharing innovative solutions through education and research, and provides value-added services to save counties and taxpayers money. For more information about NACo, visit www.naco.org.

The National League of Cities is the nation's oldest and largest organization devoted to strengthening and promoting cities as centers of opportunity, leadership and governance. NLC is a resource and advocate for 19,000 cities, towns and villages, representing more than 218 million Americans. For more information, go to www.nlc.org.