

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

September 11, 2015

The Hon. Bill Shuster
Chairman
Committee on Transportation &
Infrastructure
U.S. House of Representatives
2251 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Hon. Peter DeFazio
Ranking Member
Committee on Transportation &
Infrastructure
U.S. House of Representatives
2164 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Shuster and Ranking Member DeFazio:

As your Committee continues work on a comprehensive surface transportation bill, we would like to bring to your attention to important transportation policies regarding the movement of freight we hope you will incorporate into your legislation.

Freight is the lifeblood of the American economy. Businesses rely on complex supply chains to receive inputs and ship outputs to customers—all while minimizing transportation and warehousing costs. As consumers, nearly everything we buy – from food to clothing to electronics and durable goods – arrives via the freight system. The nation's extensive network of highways, railroads, waterways, airports, and pipelines ships a total of 17.6 billion tons of freight each year, totaling \$16.8 trillion in value in 2011.

The United States is home to a vast freight system – over 4 million route-miles of public roads, almost 140,000 miles of rail, and some 11,000 miles of navigable channels. While many communities host freight facilities and are impacted by freight operations, metropolitan areas play a critical role in managing goods movement. These regions are key nodes in the system, places with the ability to seamlessly transfer shipments between modes, the physical capacity to handle large freight volumes, extensive warehousing and logistics centers, and the appropriate skilled workforce to coordinate and manage goods movement.

These hubs and gateways are vital for export and import activity and the national movement of freight, but experience highly localized impacts such as congestion, pollution, and community disruption. With the largest concentrations of people and highly complex transportation systems, these metropolitan areas are closest to the daily impacts and understand the issues that arise from goods movement. As such, it is critical that the next transportation bill prioritize these key freight regions in any new freight program.

Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century (MAP-21) laid the groundwork for a new national freight program. The law directed DOT to develop a national freight policy, identify a

national priority network for investment, and create incentives for states to prepare their own freight plans. However, MAP-21 missed opportunities to comprehensively address freight network challenges by limiting this preliminary work to highways and not dedicating funding to a federal freight program.

The DRIVE Act, the Senate's surface transportation bill, makes strides in addressing these shortfalls by dedicating funding to a new formula freight program and multimodal competitive grant program and allowing some multimodal projects to be eligible for these new funds. We encourage you to greatly expand the freight work included in MAP-21, and the well-intentioned efforts in the DRIVE Act, and focus your policies in ways that will help alleviate congestion impacting us and the country. To that end, we respectfully request any freight program included in your draft transportation bill include:

- **Dedicated Funding to the Freight Program**

A freight program should be funded with contract authority at a level of at least \$2 billion/year.

- **Multi-modal or Mode-neutral Funding Eligibility**

A freight program should allow states, local communities, and regional planning organizations to fund projects that help move goods and people in the most efficient and safe way, regardless of whether they are road, rail, or port projects. Limitations on the use of funds, such as limitations on the funding of railway-highway grade separations, should not be included so that a true freight program can be advanced, instead of a continuation of the siloed approach to freight planning and funding. Moreover, funding eligibilities should not prioritize any specific form of infrastructure, like ports, at the expense of freight-focused areas without that infrastructure.

- **Metropolitan Area Focus**

Metropolitan areas play a critical role in managing goods movement. Like the Chicago region, these regions are key transportation hubs where bottlenecks can impact the entire country. A freight program should provide a key role for Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) in prioritizing and selecting freight projects. This role should include eligibility to apply for new national competitive grants and should ensure MPOs are involved in the planning and programming of funds in these regions.

- **Formula Funding and Metropolitan Regions**

If a freight program includes a formula component, the metrics used to distribute those funds should recognize the outsized role major metropolitan areas play in our national freight system. Places like Chicago, where we transfer shipments between modes, have the physical capacity to handle large freight volumes, extensive warehousing and logistics centers, and the appropriate skilled workforce to coordinate and manage goods movement.

- **Competitive Grant Funding Program**

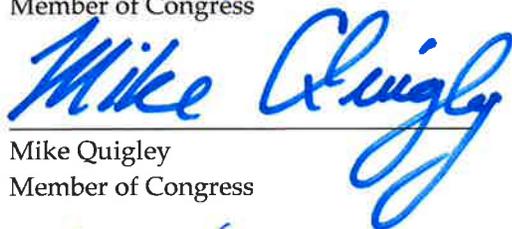
A freight program should include a competitive grant program that is also funded with contract authority and include wide-eligibility for projects of all modes, not just highways. The selection process for this program should place an emphasis on complex megaprojects that have significant national and regional economic and quality of life benefits.

Thank you for the consideration of our views. We look forward to working with you to provide our country with the freight transportation network that will keep us competitive in the 21st century economy.

Sincerely,



Robert J. Dold
Member of Congress



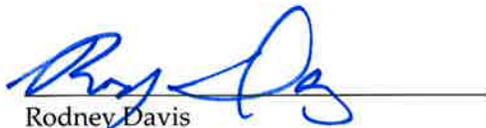
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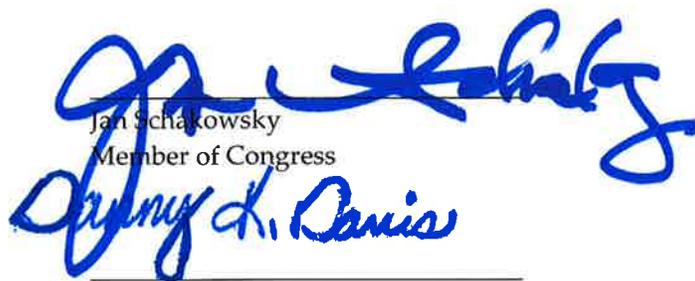
Tammy Duckworth
Member of Congress



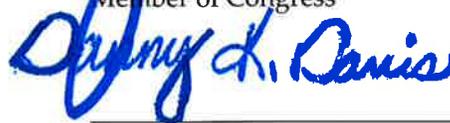
Daniel Lipinski
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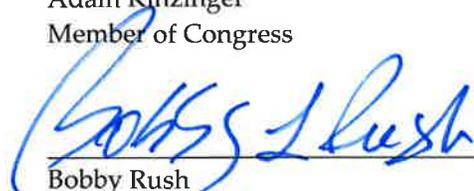
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