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October 21, 2015

The Honorable Bill Shuster
Chairman
House Transportation & Infrastructure
Committee
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Peter DeFazio
Ranking Democrat
House Transportation & Infrastructure
Committee
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Shuster and Representative DeFazio:

The 31 national association and construction trade union members of the Transportation Construction Coalition (TCC) commend you for developing the Surface Transportation Reauthorization and Reform Act (STRRA) of 2015. Approval of this legislation by the House Transportation & Infrastructure Committee is a critical step toward the enactment of a multi-year reauthorization of the highway and public transportation programs in 2015.

The TCC has long advocated changes to the transportation project environmental review and approval process to accelerate the delivery of needed transportation improvements. The STRRA includes a host of new reforms that would help achieve this goal, such as eliminating duplication in the environmental review and project planning stages, strengthening the ability of the U.S. Department of Transportation to manage other federal agencies involved in transportation project reviews and permitting, and clarifying and expanding the use of categorical exclusions.

The TCC appreciates provisions in the STRRA that would enhance the flexibility and transparency of federal highway investments. We also support the measure's increased focus on safety infrastructure and rural road safety. These proposals will help ensure a more efficient, effective and accountable federal-aid highway program.

We fully recognize the challenge of supporting new Highway Trust Fund spending that originates from holding the federal motor fuels tax rate static for more than 20 years. Nonetheless, all House members should be clear that investment levels consistent with the Congressional Budget Office's baseline—as proposed by the STRRA—would fail to keep pace with both the consumer price index and projected increases in construction material costs during the life of the bill. As a result, the legislation would support less highway, bridge, and transit improvements in the future than the current short-term extension is delivering today.

The TCC has long supported the creation of a dedicated freight program to help ensure federal highway investments are targeted at improving U.S. economic competitiveness. We are concerned the Nationally Significant Freight and Highway Projects Program would allow up to \$500 million to be used for freight rail improvements that have never been eligible to receive Highway Trust Fund resources and that this provision could dilute already limited highway investment under the STRRA. We fully support upgrading all modes of freight infrastructure, but urge members of the Committee to support freight rail projects from the General Fund.

Again, thank you for advancing a surface transportation reauthorization proposal. We look forward to working with you to secure further increases in highway and public transportation investment as the reauthorization process moves forward.

Sincerely,

The Transportation Construction Coalition