

March 10, 2017

The Honorable Tammy Duckworth, SH-524  
The Honorable Richard Durbin, SH-711  
The Honorable Todd Young, SR-400  
The Honorable Shelley Capito, SR-172  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Re: Senate Bill 496 to repeal the rule issued by the FHWA and the FTA entitled  
“Metropolitan Planning Organization and Coordination and Planning Area Reform”

Dear Senators:

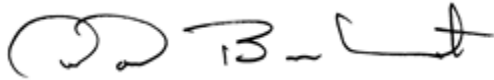
The American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) expresses our full support of Senate Bill 496 which will repeal the recently issued rule by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) entitled “Metropolitan Planning Organization Coordination and Planning Area Reform” (81 Fed. Reg. 93448) finalized on December 20, 2016. Representing all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico, AASHTO serves as a liaison between state departments of transportation (state DOTs) and the federal government.

AASHTO and its members are supportive of voluntary opportunities to strengthen regional transportation planning by states and metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs). As expressed in our comments on the NPRM regarding this rule, we do not see a basis for making substantial changes to the planning process as required in the rule.

AASHTO has significant concerns with the specific mandates that the rule imposes upon states and MPOs. The regulation will add significant additional legal and administrative requirements that would serve as barriers to constructive and flexible approaches to planning and programming being implemented by states and MPOs today. Imposing these new requirements goes against the Congressional intent of the Fixing America’s Surface Transportation (FAST) Act to streamline project delivery. The rule also epitomizes the one-size-fits-all approach that does not allow flexibility to tailor processes and solutions to the diverse needs, opportunities, and constraints faced by states and MPOs across the nation.

We appreciate your tremendous leadership in repealing this specific rule. If you would like to discuss these issues further, please contact Matthew Hardy, Ph.D., AASHTO's Program Director for Planning and Performance Management, at (202) 624-3625.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "D. Bernhardt". The signature is stylized with a large initial "D" and a horizontal line extending to the right.

David Bernhardt, P.E.

President, American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials  
Commissioner, Maine Department of Transportation

Enclosures