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March 19, 2012

The Honorable Connie Mack
United States House of Representatives
115 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Mack:

As the House takes up the transportation bill in the next few weeks, the Lee County MPO Board wanted to again express its concerns about the current House bill (H.R. 7) and to urge your support for a House version of the bill consistent with the bipartisan Senate-passed bill.

The MPO Board supports the bipartisan Senate bill which consolidates programs, streamlines project delivery while maintaining current funding levels through 2013, and includes many features that are consistent with our community's vision for a balanced multi-modal transportation system for the 21st century. Of particular importance to the Board are the following provisions in the Senate bill:

- The establishment of national policy goals and performance measures and requiring States and MPOs to use performance measures in its planning processes.
- Continuing the current 20% share for transit and providing some new flexibility to spend funds on operations.
- Protecting local control to invest in safer streets by consolidating walking and biking programs with half the funds going directly to the MPOs.
- A "Safe Streets" policy that ensures that federally funded streets are safe and complete for everyone, which will enhance our local complete streets policies and programs.
- The new national freight program and national freight strategic plan.

None of these important provisions are in the current House bill. In addition, there are grave problems with the pending House bill. In addition to our strong opposition to removing transit from the highway trust fund, expressed in our February 17th letter, the Board strongly opposes the House provision that undermines the very purpose of the MPOs, which were established in 1973 to represent a shared partnership between state and local governments in the distribution of transportation dollars. HR 7 gives the Governor authority to modify an MPO's Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) without approval or endorsement by the MPO, overriding local planning decisions.

We urge you to support a House bill along the lines of the bipartisan Senate-passed bill.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John Sullivan". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Mayor John Sullivan, Chairman
Lee County Metropolitan Planning Organization