

THE  
NEW ENGLAND  
COUNCIL

April 22, 2005

Dear Senator:

On behalf of The New England Council, I am writing to urge you and your colleagues in the Senate to approve a robust, needs-based six-year surface transportation reauthorization bill as soon as possible.

We cannot risk putting off this important legislation any longer. Reauthorization is already more than 18 months overdue. If long-term legislation is not finalized by the end of May, state transportation planners will be faced with another short-term extension and ever-increasing difficulty in crafting a long-term strategic plan for tackling critical transportation infrastructure needs.

In the past, the New England Council has joined many other organizations in support of six-year funding levels of over \$300 billion, and the Senate has passed legislation at these levels by a wide margin. While the funding level recently passed by the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee would be acceptable if no changes were made to the bill's historical funding formulas and minimum guarantee provisions, we have concerns that the bill may be altered in a way that might damage the needs-based nature of the legislation and adversely affect the New England region. Therefore, the Council would support efforts to increase the bill's funding on the Senate floor to ensure that our region's transportation infrastructure needs would not be negatively impacted.

New England has some of the nation's oldest infrastructure, a harsh climate, and an especially high cost is incurred to improve heavily congested urban roads that are home to some of the nation's busiest truck traffic. Any changes to the bill's minimum guarantee levels or underlying formulas that reduce New England's share of federal transportation funds would be an unfortunate departure from the longstanding practice of implementing a needs-driven federal transportation infrastructure program. While other regions of the United States receive comparatively more funding than New England in such areas as flood relief, hurricane relief or agriculture subsidies because of need, it is critical that New England continues to receive its appropriate needs-based share of transportation funding.

Once again, Senate action is needed as soon as possible on a surface transportation reauthorization bill that satisfies New England's transportation infrastructure needs over the next several years. Not only is this legislation critical for improving our surface transportation mobility, but it is also a key to maintaining economic growth and competitiveness in an ever-turbulent global economy. As always, if you have any questions or if we can be of assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Very Truly Yours,

James T. Brett  
President & CEO