



September 16, 2010
The Honorable Barack Obama
President
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Obama:

We are writing on behalf of the more than 70 member organizations of the Transportation for Illinois Coalition to thank you for your support of transportation infrastructure investment as outlined in your Labor Day announcement. As you indicate, infrastructure investment is a job creator and long-term support for our nation's economy. We applaud your recognition of that.

We are concerned that, as we discuss a vision for the future and potential improvements to transportation programs, we not lose sight of the fact that federal highway and transit formula funds have been critical to state and local efforts to maintain and upgrade transportation systems. Because they are predictable, flexible and available to all states and transit properties, adequate formula funds – distributed through equitable, transportation-related factors – should continue to be the backbone of the federal program for addressing needs on existing systems. The special programs which you are considering, with competitive discretionary funding distribution, would be a vital supplement to the formula funds, permitting construction of improvements which cannot be adequately accommodated under routine formula funds.

Further, we want to indicate our strong support for an increase in dedicated federal user fees to help fund a growing need for transportation infrastructure investment that will produce both immediate, well-paying jobs and long-term economic benefits. Further, we ask that you modify your stance against user fee increases and take the lead on advocating for quick passage of a well-funded, adequately sized and multi-year surface transportation bill.

Representing both business and labor interests, we find ourselves in a unique position – being able to agree upon tax or fee increases if they are dedicated to transportation construction investment. Our members have faith in the worthiness of taxes and fees that are funneled directly into our highways, roads and transit systems. At a time when citizen confidence in government is low, we believe that with your substantive and informed leadership the public will accept a user fee increase and gratefully acknowledge the positive impact of the construction that will occur as a direct result.

If we had a properly funded multi-year authorization measure in place today, thousands of skilled and well-paid union members would be working and construction businesses would be ordering from suppliers and maintaining or growing their workforces because they would know what next year's funding looked like. All of that activity would bolster government tax receipts and help a struggling economy.

Unemployment in the construction industry remains high and infrastructure spending can directly impact those numbers. Just 6% of the economic recovery funding for which you



advocated went to transportation construction, yet transportation spending accounted for more than 24% of the jobs created. The economic impact is indisputable, and yet we can't afford to simply spend. We need to support the spending with adequate revenues. The certainty of an adequately funded multi-year bill will produce immediate jobs, new equipment orders, and an upward spiral of economic benefits.

As a coalition, we stand ready to support you and explain the positives of user fee increases that produce such strong, positive results. Your leadership on the issue will give Congress the confidence and the cause to proceed.

Sincerely,

Michael Kleunik
Director, Chicago Laborers-LMCC
TFIC-co-chair

Doug Whitley
President, Illinois Chamber of Commerce
TFIC co-chair

CC: Senator Richard J. Durbin
Senator Roland W. Burris
Congressman Bobby L. Rush
Congressman Jesse L. Jackson Jr.
Congressman Daniel Lipinski
Congressman Luis V. Gutierrez
Congressman Peter Roskam
Congressman Danny K. Davis
Congresswoman Melissa Bean
Congresswoman Janice D. Schakowsky
Congressman Mark Steven Kirk
Congresswoman Debbie Halvorson
Congressman Jerry F. Costello
Congresswoman Judy Biggert
Congressman Bill Foster
Congressman Timothy V. Johnson
Congressman Donald A. Manzullo
Congressman Phil Hare
Congressman Aaron Schock
Congressman John M. Shimkus
Congressman John Mica
Congressman Jim Oberstar
Senator James M. Inhofe
Senator Barbara Boxer