



NATIONAL
ASSOCIATION *of*
REALTORS®

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May 22, 2012

Senator Barbara Boxer
Chairman
410 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Representative John L. Mica
Vice-Chairman
2165 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Senator Boxer and Representative Mica:

On behalf of the more than one million members of the National Association of REALTORS®, I congratulate you as the chair and vice-chair of the Conference Committee on Reauthorizing the Federal Surface Transportation Program on the progress that has been made so far on reauthorizing the nation's surface transportation law. At a juncture when local economies—and the residential and commercial real estate markets that anchor those economies—are struggling to regain their vitality, it is of utmost importance that funding and financing are available for transportation investments that foster economic development and facilitate sustainable growth. As you move forward conferencing Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century, or MAP-21, S. 1813, with H.R. 4348's transportation policy provisions, we strongly encourage you to retain those provisions that will help build a more robust and multimodal transportation network while enhancing local control and increasing transparency and accountability.

Specifically, we urge you to include provisions in the conference agreement that represent significant reforms and were the result of a carefully crafted bipartisan compromise in the Senate's MAP-21 bill. These provisions have bipartisan and bicameral support:

(1) Provide local access to funding for community-based transportation initiatives.

Members in both chambers agree that local leaders—who know the transportation, safety, and economic development needs of their constituents—should have more direct control over funds and projects in their communities. REALTORS® strongly agree with this as well, and supported the Cardin-Cochran Amendment to MAP-21. As a result of that amendment, MAP-21 contains provisions that will empower local governments to program funds for projects that help revitalize neighborhoods and main streets, and improve safety and access for everyone, whether traveling by car, transit, bicycle, or foot. NAR research shows that no matter what type of community Americans call home, they want to be able to walk and bike safely for recreation and transportation. The unfortunate reality has been that in many cases, if funds are not dedicated to non-road project categories or made available through competitive local/regional application processes, the chance of obtaining funding for needed bicycle and pedestrian facilities approaches zero. REALTORS® understand the significance of this infrastructure to creating neighborhoods with stable property values and a good quality of life—places where people want to buy homes.

(2) Speed project delivery without compromising local participation in project review. We support faster construction of projects that have had a full public vetting. MAP-21's provisions would speed up the process by consolidating programs and regulatory reviews, without resorting to arbitrary timelines and greatly expanded waivers and exemptions. These threaten to effectively shut local stakeholders—such as REALTORS®—out of federal and state decisions for spending millions of their taxpayer dollars on projects that affect their health, safety, and businesses.



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(3) Prioritize the repair of our existing infrastructure. We strongly support ensuring that our existing repair dollars are used to get the best results by addressing our backlog of deficient bridges and poorly maintained roads.

(4) Promote transparency and accountability in the planning process. We face many transportation challenges, from congestion to air quality to goods movement, and our limited dollars must be spent in smart ways that address multiple issues at once. MAP-21 moves in this direction by ensuring that states and regions develop and use performance measures in their long-range planning and short-term programming. This approach provides strong assurances to taxpayers that their dollars are spent in a way that demonstrates performance and accountability.

(5) Allow flexibility for local public transit funding. NAR supports adequate funding for transit, and many state and local REALTOR® associations around the country are actively supporting local transit projects that will spur economic development and help meet growing demand for housing near transit and accessible to job centers. While falling short of providing a needed infusion of additional dollars for transit, MAP-21 would at least provide transit agencies—during times of fiscal crisis—more local control of their federal transit funds in order to preserve existing service and avoid a vicious cycle of service reductions and decreasing ridership.

NAR urges you and all of the conferees to work expeditiously to pass a transportation bill and deliver the clear direction and certainty that have been missing since the last bill expired in 2009. Thank you for your help in advancing a federal transportation policy that provides for safe, convenient, and efficient transportation infrastructure that enhances the quality of communities, supports property values, and mitigates the effects of traffic congestion that accompany growth.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Moe', followed by a horizontal line.

Maurice “Moe” Veissi
2012 President, National Association of REALTORS®