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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-3815

August 24, 2016

COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS
CHAIRMAN, SUBCOMMITTEE ON
MILITARY CONSTRUCTION, VETERANS
AFFAIRS, AND RELATED AGENCIES

COMMITTEE ON ETHICS
CHAIRMAN

The Honorable Anthony Foxx
Secretary, U.S. Department of Transportation
US Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Ave, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary Foxx:

I write to express my concerns and reservations about the Federal Highway Administration / Federal Transit Administration proposed rule "Metropolitan Planning Organization Coordination and Planning Area Reform" (Docket No. FHWA-2016-0016).

I am concerned that, if implemented, the proposed rule could constrain economic competitiveness by making it more difficult to coordinate and implement regional planning decisions and projects that best fit affected local communities, such as those that I represent in Pennsylvania's 15th Congressional District. While I acknowledge the Department of Transportation's efforts to improve and organize infrastructure planning in burgeoning regions, I believe these decisions and partnerships are best served by the independent decisions and collaborative partnerships established between local planning commissions and Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) under their current structure. This proposed rule would carry an unnecessary degree of federal government overreach into these planning decisions, and adversely impact the ability of regional planners to effectively do their jobs and continue to have a say in the projects being carried out in their communities and areas of jurisdiction.

My staff and I have been in contact with all of the MPOs in my district, and they have universally expressed serious objections about this proposed rule and the difficulties it could introduce for regional planning efforts. I am concerned that the establishment of new, larger Metropolitan Planning Areas (MPAs) and MPOs would delay responsiveness, create unnecessary competition within the MPAs, and make it harder for local concerns and proposals to receive the attention and consideration that they deserve.

As such, I request that the comment period for this proposed rulemaking be extended for at least 60 days beyond the current deadline of 26 August 2016 so that affected stakeholders can have the time they need to further assess the implications of this proposal and provide their feedback. I believe that a full and formal review of such feedback will demonstrate that this proposed rule is both unwarranted and unnecessary, and it is my hope that any further action on this proposal will take all alternative recommendations into consideration.

Thank you for your attention to these concerns.

Sincerely,



CHARLES W. DENT
Member of Congress

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