



DRAFT Congressional Delegation Letter

April 13, 2021

Dear Congressional Delegation:

The Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (CAMPO) serves as the regional transportation planning entity for North Carolina's Greater Raleigh Urbanized Area and represents 27 government agencies in and including Wake, Johnston, Harnett, Franklin, and Granville County. One of CAMPO's duties is to plan and prioritize transportation projects throughout our Region. CAMPO's work and abilities are largely impacted by the federal aid funding allocated to the State of North Carolina and Region through transportation reauthorization funding. CAMPO has been following the development of the next surface transportation reauthorization bill closely and would like to request consideration on the parameters of the proposed addition of Congressional Member Designated Projects, traditionally referred to as earmark projects.

First and foremost, CAMPO is grateful for the continued and increased support for transportation and infrastructure funding over the past few years and during the challenging budgetary circumstances of COVID-19. At a time when the need for growing, improving, and maintaining our transportation infrastructure feels greater than ever, CAMPO is pleased to see that the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee is pursuing additional approaches to support projects that are priorities in our Communities, including Congressional Member Designated Projects. **CAMPO is writing to request that if Member Designated Projects are ultimately included in the House's Reauthorization Bill, Congress fund these projects using "above the line" or additional federal funding sources, rather than through the State's existing contract authority.** This request is for two main reasons: 1) using "below the line" funding impacts the region's ability to fund projects through traditional planning, prioritization, and public input processes, and 2) the State of North Carolina's Strategic Transportation Investment (STI) Law would severely limit the Region's ability to utilize Member Designated Project Funding, unless specific criteria are met.

The Capital Area MPO traditionally designates federal funding for transportation projects in the region through a competitive process at either the statewide or regional level. These prioritization processes allow the region to refer to our long-range transportation plan (Metropolitan Transportation Plan), involve members of the public, and ultimately select projects that have been vetted for project readiness, public support, planning consistency, and a high impact to cost ratio. Projects selected through these avenues are programmed in both the Statewide Transportation Improvement Plan (STIP) and Metropolitan Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP) to utilize the contract authority awarded to the state and region over a 10-year period. By funding Member Designated Projects with existing state contract authority, available funding for projects already selected for funding and programmed in the STIP and TIP would decrease and ultimately disrupt the ability of the Region to complete projects that have already been selected for funding. This issue would be mitigated if Member Designated Projects were funded with additional federal funding sources.

The request to fund Member Designated Projects with "above the line" funding sources is especially important for the State of North Carolina, given the State's Strategic Transportation Investment (STI)



Law strictly limits how federal aid funding can be distributed in North Carolina. North Carolina's STI Law requires *all* federal aid funding to compete through the State's Strategic Transportation Prioritization (SPOT) process. The SPOT process is a biannual statewide funding process that is highly competitive and ultimately selects projects funded in the State for the next 6 years. This law allows exceptions for projects funded through discretionary programs that are outside of the statewide contract authority. NCDOT's interpretation of the STI Law is that if Member Designated Projects are funded with existing state contract authority, NCDOT will not be able to *release* funding to the project unless it has competed and scored high enough in SPOT to receive funding. This drastically limits the number of projects eligible to benefit from receiving funding through a Member Designated Project award, even if the projects are designated specifically in the reauthorization bill. Since the STI Law allows an exception for projects funded through discretionary funding sources, Member Designated Projects Funded with "above the line" sources would not be subject to compete through the SPOT process.

CAMPO again appreciates the House's continuing interest in providing increased budgetary support to meet the ever-growing transportation and infrastructure needs throughout the Country. CAMPO requests considering funding Member Designated Projects in the House Surface Transportation Reauthorization Bill using "above the line" or additional federal funding sources, rather than through the State's existing contract authority. By doing so, the House could mitigate concerns of reducing available funding for previously selected projects in the Region and eligibility barriers from North Carolina's Strategic Transportation Investment (STI) Law.

Sincerely:

CAMPO Executive Board Chair