



January 16, 2026

The Metro Civic Leadership Alliance (Metro Civic Alliance, Alliance) is a coalition of organizations comprised of the leading CEOs and senior executives of major employers, professional firms, universities, and other senior civic leaders in large metro areas in the United States. The Metro Civic Alliance has previously engaged in surface transportation reauthorization efforts through providing letters of support, comments, and opportunities to convene with decision-makers. Our cities and regions benefitted greatly from the active authorization, the bipartisan Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), and have a vested interest in continuing to participate in reauthorization discussions. This document serves as an outline for the Alliance's priorities for the next authorization, recognizing that IIJA expires on September 30, 2026.

We are committed to making our metro regions the best places to live, work, and grow a business. Together, our organizations represent the nation's largest employers, and our regions make up nearly 25 percent of the country's population and 30 percent of our national Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

We know that the health of our economies is directly linked to the presence of strong, robust, and well-funded multimodal transportation networks. To continue to grow our regional and national economies, it is essential to have significant investments with supportive policies for all transportation modes, especially in our urban cores. A predictable, sustainable, and long-term federal investment across all transportation modes critical to national trade will enable states and operators to advance our integrated transportation system of roads, rails, trails, waterways, and airports and remain competitive in today's global economy.

Through this alliance, we will use our collective voice to engage in federal transportation policy and decision making, elevating the importance of strengthening our multimodal, urban mobility and infrastructure network as critical components to advancing regional economic prosperity of our cities and the nation.

## **Metro Civic Alliance's Priorities for Reauthorization**

In alignment with our collective commitment to multimodal infrastructure-driven economic growth and streamlined project delivery, below are our proposed policy and funding priorities:

1. Leveraging transportation investment to spur economic growth
2. Modernizing regulatory processes to streamline infrastructure project delivery
3. Better connecting economies by modernizing intercity and commuter rail
4. Maintaining safe, high-performing public transit systems
5. Leveraging innovation to respond to growing congestion
6. Promoting transit-oriented development
7. Investing in multimodal freight and other infrastructure critical to trade
8. Continuing and strengthening programmatic support for major aviation hubs

***Leveraging transportation investment to spur economic growth:*** To ensure sustained prosperity, it is critical that major metro areas and economic centers have continued access to competitive and direct federal funding. The U.S. DOT and Congress should remain committed to allocating Federal transportation funding based on transparent and objective criteria, such as demand and access to opportunity. Our regions' cities and counties have high-performing transportation departments, with a proven record of responsible stewardship of taxpayer dollars, public-private partnership, and on-time project delivery. It is vital that large urban areas remain eligible to compete for multi-modal transportation funding that has already unlocked and will continue to foster economic growth in our regions, including grants meant to improve the condition of bridges and roads, modernize transit and rail fleets, improve safety, and incentivize innovation.

***Modernizing regulatory processes to streamline infrastructure project delivery:*** Unnecessary delays and increased costs due to time-consuming permitting and superfluous approval processes hinder progress. These processes should be modernized to preserve critical environmental safeguards while streamlining and expediting project delivery, maximizing return on investment, and prioritizing permit durability and procedural certainty. Examples of promising reforms include targeted expansion of the use of NEPA Categorical Exclusions (CEs) and Programmatic Categorical Exclusion (PCE) agreements, reducing the timeline and burden of NEPA and permitting processes especially for smaller projects, and developing a more flexible, streamlined Section 106 review process that better clarifies supporting agencies' roles. The surface reauthorization should continue to facilitate and promote private investment and creative financing opportunities for infrastructure projects, as supported by the current Innovative Finance and Asset Concession Program. These and other reforms, such as consolidating similar and overlapping grant opportunities, will ease the administrative burden for applicants, streamline approval processes, and simplify eligibility and reporting requirements. The efficient delivery of vital infrastructure investments that grow our economies and foster thriving communities must be prioritized.

**Better connecting economies by modernizing intercity and commuter rail:** Rail is a vital component of our regional transportation systems, and this reauthorization should sustain robust federal support for passenger rail. Particular attention should be paid to upgrading infrastructure bottlenecks that are inhibiting ridership and economic growth across the country, including continued support of the Hudson Gateway Tunnel Project, Washington Union Station Expansion Project, Caltrain Downtown Rail Extension, state-supported passenger rail programs, the privately-funded Florida Brightline, and continued levels of funding for the Federal-State Partnership for Intercity Passenger Rail grant program. While we recognize the administration's desire to review previously awarded grants to mega-projects such as Frederick Douglass Tunnel, Hudson Gateway Tunnel Project, Washington Union Station, and others, we encourage the administration to efficiently and expeditiously conduct their evaluation to avoid unnecessary stalling and ensure the timely delivery of these vital projects. The authorization should also continue the momentum of FRA's Long-Distance Service Study by supporting new and improved intercity rail connections to foster economic growth and spur connections between major urban hubs.

**Maintaining safe, high-performing public transit systems:** Safe, high-quality, and frequent transit strengthens our regional economy by efficiently connecting people to jobs, education, and healthcare. Rail and bus transit are critical to our regions, and our transit systems need a strong federal partner with a well-funded Capital Investment Grants Program to speed up delivery of key transit expansion, enhancement, and state of good repair investments that enable seamless, efficient delivery of service. Improving the rider experience through service and public safety enhancements on transit continue to be major priorities for our regions. Many are experiencing lower-than-average crime rates in 2025 due to increased fare enforcement, visible police presence, and focused public safety technology and infrastructure enhancements. As transit ridership across the country has surpassed 85% of pre-pandemic levels, continued investment into our leading cities' public transit systems – many of which are our regions' major transportation spines – is critical to economic growth and public safety in our cities. The authorization should incorporate the administration's and our collective regional commitments to making public transit safe and reliable by empowering cities and metropolitan regions to develop targeted, locally-informed responses to distinct urban mobility challenges.

**Leveraging innovation to respond to growing congestion:** Any potential new programs should provide federal funding directly to urban areas for innovative, multimodal transportation solutions to address congestion and keep our regions moving. Metro areas have been grappling with increasing congestion since 2021, with commuters in our cities losing as much as 100 hours a year due to traffic delays in 2024. However, federal funding and policies are not structured directly to address this congestion. While congestion is a sign of robust economic activity, excessive congestion inhibits our regional economies. Funding for customizable and scalable strategies that empower local authorities to combat congestion like performance-driven tolling and investments in high-quality alternatives to driving alone such as HOV lanes, transit and transit priority, passenger rail, and multi-use trail networks should be prioritized.

**Promoting transit-oriented development:** Transit-oriented development (TOD) is a cost-effective strategy that advances the economic vibrancy and vitality of our regional economies as well as the financial viability and health of our state and local governments, authorities, and agencies. TOD and the public-private partnerships often critical to its implementation make the best use of existing infrastructure assets by concentrating housing and commercial development around high-capacity transportation options, thus responsibly boosting the housing supply and enabling more Americans to benefit from increased access to jobs, education, and other opportunities. Reducing red tape for TOD financing and project deployment through the Railroad Rehabilitation and Improvement Financing (RRIF) and the Transportation Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (TIFIA) programs would unlock private investment, foster economic growth, and streamline government efficiencies, thereby reducing taxpayer costs.

**Investing in multimodal freight and other infrastructure critical to global trade:** Urban multimodal freight networks are vital to regional, national, and global trade. Rail, port, water, bridge, road, highway, and aviation infrastructure are all instrumental to moving goods efficiently and serving our cities' economies and, ultimately, the American people. The upcoming surface reauthorization must reflect the logically complex freight and trade realities of our leading cities – that those 21<sup>st</sup> century networks are inherently multimodal and affect millions of businesses and consumers. Any new or continued competitive grant programs should incorporate this mixed approach to trade infrastructure ensuring that any freight investments are not siloed into one mode of transportation.

**Continued programmatic support for major aviation hubs:** Our metropolitan regions depend on our airports to remain globally competitive, and the entire nation depends on the seamless and continuous operations of its busiest aviation hubs. The upcoming reauthorization should maintain levels of significant funding and programmatic support for large capital aviation investments. Major urban airports should continue to be considered and prioritized based on total annual enplanements for larger annual capital funds – such as the Airport Infrastructure Grant and the New Airport Terminal Programs – beyond the Airport Improvement Program. Airports should continue to be eligible recipients for low interest financing through U.S. DOT Transportation Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (TIFIA) program. These programs and funding mechanisms have enabled unprecedented infrastructure upgrades to improve the traveler experience at the nation's busiest airports, lowering the cost of capital for large projects and facilitating needed investments to bolster connections to the surface transportation network.

The metropolitan regions, leading employers, and institutions represented by the Metro Civic Leadership Alliance span the full geographic and economic spectrums of our nation. Yet, we are aligned in our view that a robust, multimodal transportation system represents the foundation for our collective ability to grow our local and national economy, efficiently move goods and people, and connect all residents to opportunity. The future success of our regions is directly tied to the

nation's prosperity and requires a strong federal partner to advance transformative transportation investments. We stand ready to work with elected officials and our federal delegations to pass a transformative transportation bill.

Sincerely,

Bay Area Council  
Civic Committee of the Commercial Club of Chicago  
Dallas Regional Chamber  
Greater Houston Partnership  
Greater Washington Partnership  
Massachusetts Competitive Partnership  
Metro Atlanta Chamber  
Partnership for New York City  
Partnership for Rhode Island