



U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure

Washington, DC 20515

James L. Oberstar
Chairman

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July 20, 2009

Mr. Alan Clark
Houston-Galveston Area Council
3555 Timmons, Suite 120
Houston, TX 77027

JUL 22 2009

Dear Mr. Clark:

The Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure continues to closely oversee the implementation of transportation and infrastructure provisions of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (“Recovery Act”) (P.L. 111-5),¹ to ensure that the funds provided are invested quickly, efficiently, and in harmony with the job-creating purposes of the Recovery Act. To this end, we request that Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) coordinate with their Governor’s office to ensure the Governor provides updated specific transparency and accountability information about funds suballocated to your MPO by **September 20, 2009**, and **November 20, 2009**.

In the nearly five months since enactment of the Recovery Act, many States, MPOs, and public transit agencies have demonstrated the ability of transportation and infrastructure programs to create and sustain family-wage jobs, contribute to our nation’s long-term economic growth, and help the United States recover from the worst recession since the Great Depression. These five months have also provided ample time and opportunity for underperforming States, MPOs, and public transit agencies to step up their efforts, sign contracts, and put shovels into the ground. ***Accordingly, beginning in September, the Committee will highlight the best and worst performers in implementing Recovery Act transportation and infrastructure programs.***

The periodic transparency and accountability reports also reveal that States and MPOs are lagging behind in putting to work Recovery Act highway funds that are suballocated to MPOs. I recognize that States had been focused on meeting the June 30, 2009 deadline for obligating 50 percent of State-administered highway funds, a deadline that does not apply to funds suballocated to

¹ The Recovery Act provides \$64.1 billion of infrastructure investment authorized by the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure to enhance the safety, security, and efficiency of our highway, transit, rail, aviation, environmental, inland waterways, public buildings, and maritime transportation infrastructure. This investment includes almost \$40 billion of Federal-aid highway, public transit, and Clean Water environmental infrastructure funding under the jurisdiction of this Committee that is distributed directly to States, metropolitan areas, and public transit agencies by existing statutory formulas.

The five months since the Recovery Act's enactment has provided enough time for States, MPOs, and public transit agencies, to significantly implement Recovery Act programs by signing contracts for and beginning shovel-ready projects. By now recipients of Recovery Act funds should have completed the diversity of actions and processes that exist on State and local levels, including public participation and bidding of projects, and be able to quickly and efficiently invest these funds.

Accordingly, beginning in September, the Committee will highlight the best and worst performers in implementing Recovery Act transportation and infrastructure programs. The Committee plans to focus on the percentage of allocated funds associated with projects under contract and projects underway. Monitoring these indicators, along with the amount of allocated funds associated with obligated projects as well as projects put out to bid, will help us measure the Recovery Act's progress.

Focusing exclusively on the funds outlaid fails to provide a good sense of Recovery Act progress because transportation projects primarily operate on a reimbursement mode. For example, States seek reimbursement for highway projects after construction is underway. Knowing how many funds are associated with projects under contract and projects underway better captures the extent to which Recovery Act funds have arrived on Main Street.

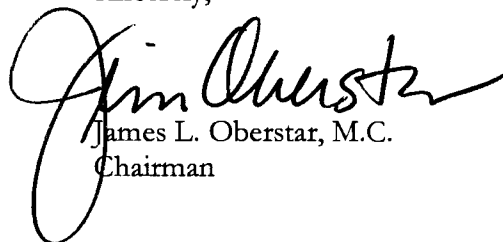
ONGOING REPORTING

The Committee requests that recipients submit updated reports to the Committee by **September 20, 2009**, and **November 20, 2009** (data in these reports should include cumulative information regarding what has occurred as of August 31, 2009, and October 31, 2009, respectively). As before, Governors will report to the Committee on behalf of MPOs regarding highway formula funds suballocated to your MPO, which serves a transportation management area pursuant to Section 133 of Title 23, United States Code. The Committee will continue to request that Governors regularly report to the Committee on behalf of MPOs regarding implementation of the Recovery Act. ***MPOs should not directly report to the Committee.***

If you have any questions regarding this request, please have your staff visit our website or contact Joseph Wender, Counsel to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, at (202) 225-4472 or Joseph.Wender@mail.house.gov.

Thank you for your efforts.

Sincerely,



James L. Oberstar, M.C.
Chairman