April 13, 2020

Elaine L. Chao
U.S. Secretary of Transportation

US Department of Transportation

1200 New Jersey Ave, SE

West Building Room PL-401

Washington, DC 20590

RE: Rural Infrastructure Investment Through Stimulus 4

Dear Secretary Chao:

I am writing on behalf of the Rural Counties Task Force (RCTF) of California. The RCTF represents the 26-county rural transportation planning agencies across California. Transportation infrastructure throughout these 26 counties serves the fundamental needs of residents and commerce of rural California. Rural counties have relatively small populations limiting their ability to generate local revenue to support transportation projects and programs. Rural counties rely on State and Federal funding, 54% and 13% respectively, to deliver transportation projects and services. While the populations in these Counties are small, the lane miles of roadway are many. Rural counties have 14% of the total local road network in the state, 9% of the funding, and 6% of the population. Additionally, these rural roadways support the access to the recreation and tourism activities enjoyed by the ballooning populations of urban centers throughout California.

Based upon these characteristics, RCTF members are requesting any new funding made available through another stimulus package follow a modified Surface Transportation Block Grant Program (STBGP) formula. Current STBGP formula distribution is solely based on resident population, and does not factor lane mileage, which can be disproportionately high in rural counties. Some of the formulaic transportation funding programs include a lane mileage component and thus are much more equitable across rural regions.  Including a road mileage component provides sustainable funding to the rural areas.   Therefore, RCTF members are asking that any new stimulus transportation funding be allocated through a formula which includes both population and lane miles.

Under the ARRA, which used the existing STBGP formula, was not supportive of many rural counties due to their smaller populations. This was certainly frustrating to many rural counties, because low population doesn’t usually equate to less lane mileage to maintain and operate.

Stimulus is meant for to help all of America including rural communities.  Allocating transportation funding by population only ignores the characteristics and needs of rural counties, funneling most of the funding to large urban centers.

As always, the RCTF greatly appreciates the opportunity to coordinate with U.S. DOT and would be happy to discuss this approach for stimulus funding.

Sincerely,

Woodrow Deloria, Executive Director

**El Dorado County Transportation Commission**

Chair, Rural Counties Task Force