

## **The Metropolitan Planning Enhancement Act (H.R. 3787)**

Many Americans have grown more and more cynical about how their hard-earned tax dollars are spent on infrastructure projects by transportation agencies. Many believe that highway and bridge projects in the past have been selected based on political expedience and insider connections rather than statewide and regional transportation goals.

The Metropolitan Planning Enhancement Act rebuilds public trust by promoting evidence-based decision-making that supports transportation investments that offer the highest return for taxpayers and commuters. Our bill accomplishes this through increased transparency and improved accountability:

### **Increased Transparency**

Projects in state and regional transportation plans would include project descriptions and be selected using a transparent process that includes criteria, established by states, supporting regional, state and national goals. In many states, the public is not provided any information about the criteria that is used by transportation agencies to determine how limited transportation resources are spent. This makes it extremely challenging for the public to understand how their tax dollars are being spent or how additional revenue might improve their daily commute.

### **Improved Accountability**

Projects in a Transportation Improvement Program would be required to include a project description and be scored against the other projects in the region or state. Today, few states provide project descriptions, let alone provide insights about why a project was advanced. Requiring that projects be assessed with objective criteria removes politics from the project selection process, and ensures that limited transportation resources are invested in projects that provide the highest return on investment. Furthermore, requiring states and metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs) to communicate how projects are chosen enhances the public's understanding of, and confidence in, the project selection process.

Forward-thinking states and MPOs are already incorporating project prioritization criteria to improve public trust through improved accountability and transparency. States like Virginia, North Carolina, Tennessee, Louisiana, and Texas, and MPOs like California's Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) and Sacramento Area Council of Governments (SACOG), as well as Illinois' Chicago Metropolitan Agency on Planning (CMAP), have implemented performance-based project selection programs or enacted policies to implement related programs in the coming years.

Effective and efficient transportation systems are critical to a growing and prosperous economy. We cannot allow diminishing resources to be directed towards bad investments. The Metropolitan Planning Enhancement Act would accomplish this by greatly expanding transparency on the opaque project selection process currently being used by many state DOTs and MPOs, and help rebuild the trust of the traveling public by ensuring investments go towards projects that provide the best outcome and achieve national program goals.