

ASSOCIATION OF
INDIANA COUNTIES, INC.,
Indianapolis, IN, April 23, 1997.

Hon. STEVE BUYER,
U.S. House of Representatives,
Washington, DC.

DEAR CONGRESSMAN BUYER: As the debate moves forward on the reauthorization of federal transportation programs this year, much is being said about the impact on local governments of the Streamlined Transportation Efficiency Program for the 21st Century, or STEP 21 proposal. It is important for you to know that as an association of county officials, the Association of Indiana Counties enthusiastically supports the STEP 21 proposal.

STEP 21 preserves all of the current law's local planning authority and funding guarantees. In as much as STEP 21 would direct more funding to states like Indiana, local governments will be in line for more funding for our much needed road, street and bridge projects. An added bonus of STEP 21's streamlining and flexibility features will be the ability for us to make funding choices that make sense for our counties, not the one size fits all approach of current law.

I appreciate your efforts in working toward passage of the STEP 21 program, finally directing a fair share of transportation funds to our state and its cities, towns and counties.

Sincerely,

BETH O'LAUGHLIN,
Executive Director.

EVANSVILLE URBAN
TRANSPORTATION STUDY,
Evansville, IN, April 25, 1997.

Representative STEVE BUYER,
House of Representatives,
Washington, DC.

DEAR REPRESENTATIVE BUYER: The Evansville Urban Transportation Study (EUTS) represents the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for southern Indiana. This letter extends the EUTS Policy Committee's support of the STEP 21 legislation, Streamlined Transportation Efficiency Program for the 21st Century, which is being considered by Congress.

The STEP 21 legislation continues to support strong planning through the continuation of support for metropolitan planning organizations. Additionally, STEP 21 will guarantee state and local governments a minimum return of 95 cents on the dollar (rather than the 82 cents Indiana now receives). STEP 21 provides funding formula guarantees to urban areas of 200,000 plus population, and continued agreement with the Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT) will allow STEP 21 to benefit the urban areas of less than 200,000 in population. It is important that large and small urban areas continue to be represented through the MPO process.

The EUTS Policy Committee strongly supports the return of more federal funds to local and state uses. STEP 21 provides the people of Indiana with an opportunity to continue their participation in a cooperative planning process and to receive back, in the form of transportation infrastructure, a higher return of the dollars sent to Washington, DC.

Please support the STEP 21 program. The additional revenue would assist Indiana and other donor states in meeting the many challenges it faces in addressing future economic, social and infrastructure needs. I respectfully appreciate your support.

Sincerely,

ROSE M. ZIGENFUS,
Executive Director.

CITY OF LAFAYETTE,
OFFICE OF THE MAYOR,
Lafayette, IN, April 24, 1997.

Hon. ED PEASE,
Cannon House Office Building,
Washington, DC.

DEAR REPRESENTATIVE PEASE, In this year's reauthorization of federal transportation programs I want you to know of my support for getting a fair share of federal highway funds for Indiana. I believe that the STEP 21 (Streamlined Transportation Efficiency Program for the 21st Century) program is the way to accomplish that goal.

It is important for you to know that the State of Indiana, in partnership with its local governments, support the STEP 21 effort. I appreciate your efforts on behalf of the STEP 21 program which will bring a fairer share of our highway taxes back to Indiana communities.

Sincerely,

DAVE HEATH,
Mayor.

MPO COUNCIL
July 16, 1996.

Congressman PETER J. VISCLOSKEY,
Cannon House Office Bldg.,
Washington, DC.

DEAR CONGRESSMAN VISCLOSKEY: The Indiana Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) Council represents the twelve urbanized areas of the state of Indiana. This letter extends the MPO Council's support of the STEP 21 legislation (Streamlined Transportation Efficiency Program for the 21st Century) which is currently being drafted by a consortium of states nationwide, and considered by Congress.

The STEP 21 legislation continues to support strong planning through the continuation of support for metropolitan planning organizations. Additionally, STEP 21 will guarantee state and local governments a minimum return of 95 cents on the dollar (rather than the 82 cents Indiana now receives). STEP 21 provides funding formula guarantees to urban areas of 200,000 plus population. The MPO Council also represents urban areas of under 200,000 in population. It is important that large and small urban areas continue to be represented through the MPO process.

The Indiana MPO Council strongly supports the return of more federal funds to local and state uses. STEP 21, as described in this letter, provides the people of Indiana with an opportunity to continue their participation in a cooperative planning process and to receive back (in the form of better highways) a higher return of the dollars sent to Washington D.C.

Please support the STEP 21 program as described. The additional revenue would assist Indiana in meeting the many challenges it faces in addressing future economic, social and infrastructure needs. We respectfully appreciate your support.

STEP 21, THE NEXT LOGICAL STEP TO ISTEA IN REFORMING TRANSPORTATION FUNDING

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California [Mr. CONDIT] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. CONDIT. Mr. Speaker, as our transportation needs change going into the 21st century, our current funding formula dating back to 1916 needs to be updated. H.R. 647, STEP 21, is a commonsense approach to reforming transportation funding that simplifies and

reduces the complex ISTEA program and funding set-aside. STEP 21 is not a substitute bill for ISTEA. It represents the next logical step to ISTEA. Our focus is strictly on highway funding. Our purpose is to create equity among the States. It is time to fix an outdated funding formula. We need to strike a balance between equity and meeting our transportation needs.

STEP 21 ensures a true 95 percent return on States' contributions to the Federal highway trust fund. In California, STEP 21's funding formula would mean an additional \$500 million per year over the life of ISTEA. California deserves a better rate of return. When we factor out emergencies and transit funding, California receives 86 cents on the dollar, and that is wrong. The question is one of equity, and it is time for California to receive her fair share.

The argument is not whether the Federal Government should play a role in administering the highway program, it is how big, how big the Federal role should be. It is time to allow States and local officials the flexibility to solve their own unique set of problems. STEP 21 gives local governments more flexibility without endangering CMAQ or enhancement programs. It allows them to decide how to best spend the money, whether it is in improving the air quality, improving traffic problems, or building more bicycle trails.

It does not change current MPO structures. Under STEP 21, MPO's will continue to receive the same set-aside they receive under ISTEA. It is time for greater equity and more local control. It is time for STEP 21.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to also commend the gentleman from Texas [Mr. DELAY] for his leadership in this area. He has done great work for us. I believe that the country will benefit from us passing STEP 21.

WHY STEP 21 AND ISTEA IS GOOD FOR AMERICA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Tennessee [Mr. DUNCAN] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. DUNCAN. Mr. Speaker, as a Member from a so-called donor State, I rise in strong support of the STEP 21 program. This program would permit each State to receive a far more equitable return on what is paid into the Federal highway trust fund. My State, Tennessee, has received only 78 cents for every \$1 we have contributed over the last few years. This is not fair, and it is not right. With the passage of STEP 21, each State will be assured of at least a 95 percent return on its contribution to the Federal highway trust fund. Not only will STEP 21 benefit Tennessee, but it will benefit the entire Nation by providing a consistent economic benefit for all States.

In addition, STEP 21 lets the States decide where they want to spend their highway trust fund allocation. Tennesseans do not need Washington to

dictate to them what they need and how to spend it. Every State has different needs, and every State is capable of providing for their own funding in this way, making the decisions.

This proposal provides the flexibility, the STEP 21 proposal provides the flexibility to tailor transportation solutions to their particular circumstances by returning the decision-making to the State and local levels. Mayors, county executives, Governors, and other elected officials from around the country have endorsed the flexibility of STEP 21 because they would have the power to determine how transportation dollars are spent.

One area of the present law which needs to be changed is the one dealing with the metric system. Last year I introduced H.R. 3617, which was a bill to amend the National Highway Designation Act relating to metric system highway requirements. Instead of reintroducing this bill, I am going to attempt to add the language of this to the current ISTEA legislation.

This language would repeal the mandate that all Federal-aid highway design and construction be performed in metric. Under this legislation, the choice of whether to use the metric system in design and construction of Government projects would be left to the discretion of the States, as it should be. My proposal could conceivably save hundreds of millions of dollars.

For example, just one medium-sized Tennessee contractor told me that it will cost his company alone more than \$1 million to convert forms and equipment and train his employees to comply with these metric mandates. In addition, another company in my State told me that its cost of conversion would be a minimum of \$3 million.

When I asked the Congressional Research Service to see if there were any estimates on how much this conversion would cost across the Nation as a whole, the only answer they could come up with was that it could not be determined, but it would be in the billions.

There are companies in every State which face many millions in similar costs if something is not done. Many small- and medium-sized businesses and even a few large American companies are being hard hit by the metric requirements, all for the convenience of a few extremely large multinational companies which do not really need our help.

Some people say we must convert to the metric system of measurement because most of the world has done so. In my opinion, this is simply not a good enough reason to cost American taxpayers and consumers hundreds of millions of dollars. These requirements do not make our roads one bit better. Simply, the benefits of these metric requirements do not outweigh their costs.

Removing this metric mandate will go a long way to help small business.

We have never been afraid to be a special and unique Nation in the past, Mr. Speaker. So to say that we must go metric because most other nations have is just not a good reason, either.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support STEP 21. By doing so, they will be supporting fairness and equity in our highway funding system. I urge their support for STEP 21.

I would also like to commend the gentleman from Texas [Mr. DELAY] and the gentleman from California [Mr. CONDIT] for their leadership on this issue. We need the STEP 21 legislation to put fairness and equity back into our highway funding system.

STATEMENT IN SUPPORT OF STEP 21

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Virginia [Mr. GOODE] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. GOODE. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of STEP 21, and also commend the gentleman from Texas [Mr. DELAY] and the gentleman from California [Mr. CONDIT] for their leadership and work on this issue.

There is an old saying in the Fifth District of Virginia that the best way to figure out where to build a new sidewalk is to look for the worn path through the grass. That saying applies equally well to the construction of roads.

In my district, which is geographically larger than some States, there are barely 30 miles of interstate highway and what amounts to miles and miles of well-worn paths through the grass and across the creeks and rivers and through the mountains.

Those well-worn paths are the roads that comprise the transportation network of the Fifth District of Virginia, a network that inhibits economic development, endangers our citizens who travel the roads, and were built for far less traffic than they are asked to handle today.

Yet, in this fiscal year, it is estimated that Virginia will receive only 81 cents in transportation funds for every dollar in gas taxes that we pay to Washington. Last year that amount was 74 cents for every dollar paid.

In fact, over the course of ISTEA, Virginia will receive an average of only about 83 cents for every dollar Virginians send to the Federal highway trust fund. And so today I rise in support of STEP 21. STEP 21 is a bipartisan proposal. It adopts a funding formula to more equitably distribute the money that Americans pay as gas taxes. STEP 21 assures that every State will receive at least 95 cents on the dollar. STEP 21 will make ISTEA's promise of funding fairness a reality.

Mr. Speaker, as the House continues to consider ways in which to create an intermodal transportation network that will treat every State fairly, that will increase safety on the highways, and that will create opportunities for

economic development, I urge my colleagues to support STEP 21, the ISTEA Integrity Restoration Act.

IN SUPPORT OF STEP 21 PROPOSAL

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. COMBEST). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas [Mr. TURNER] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. TURNER. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 647, the STEP 21 proposal, and I join my colleagues in thanking the gentleman from Texas [Mr. DELAY] and the gentleman from California [Mr. CONDIT] for the leadership that they have given on this very important issue. STEP 21 is an effort to bring equity and fairness to the financing of our highway systems in this country.

Each of us have our individual list of highway needs. As I look at the Second District in Texas that I represent, I know we are working hard to try to bring about the Interstate 69 project, which is a vital corridor from mid-America into and through Texas to Mexico to access the markets opened by NAFTA.

We have projects like Interstate 10 that are badly in need of repair, where a very dangerous curve has cost the lives of several individuals. We have projects like loop projects in the city of Cleveland, projects that cannot be funded unless we adequately and fairly fund our highway system.

As a former member of the Texas Senate, I know how important Federal highway funds are to our States; and it is for that reason that I think it is even more important that that funding be fair and equitable.

Since 1992, Texas has received back only 77 cents of every dollar that Texans contributed to the Federal highway fund. That is not fair, that is not equitable, and that is not consistent with the highway needs of Texas or any other State that is short-changed under the current formulas.

This policy is not only bad for Texas, it is bad for the country, because it is true that contributions to the Federal highway trust fund, those gasoline taxes that we all pay, are reflective of highway usage in our States. STEP 21 would ensure that every State gets back at least 95 cents of every dollar that we pay in Federal gasoline taxes to the Federal highway trust fund.

STEP 21 also ensures greater flexibility in the expenditure of funds by our States. Having come from the Texas legislature, I trust Texans to know what is best for Texas highways, and I think this proposal gives our States the kind of flexibility that they need and they deserve to meet their growing transportation needs.

This is not just a question of regional equity. This is a question of national interest. All of us depend upon a good system of transportation. The traffic that flows from Texas to the East