



1415 L Street,  
Suite 300  
Sacramento, CA  
95814

916.321.9000  
sacog.org

April 30, 2025

The Honorable Sam Graves  
Chairman  
Committee on Transportation & Infrastructure  
2165 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Rick Larsen  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Transportation & Infrastructure  
2165 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable David Rouzer  
Chairman  
Highways and Transit Subcommittee  
Committee on Transportation & Infrastructure  
2165 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Eleanor Holmes Norton  
Ranking Member  
Highways and Transit Subcommittee  
Committee on Transportation & Infrastructure  
2165 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

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Dear Chairman Graves, Ranking Member Larsen, Chairman Rouzer, and Ranking Member Norton:

On behalf of the Sacramento Area Council of Governments (SACOG), the metropolitan planning organization (MPO) for the six-county greater Sacramento region, we respectfully submit the following recommendations for your consideration as you begin work on the next surface transportation reauthorization bill. We commend your leadership and continued bipartisan efforts to meet the evolving challenges of our nation's surface transportation system.

SACOG serves as the federally designated MPO and transportation planning agency for a region that includes Sacramento, Sutter, Yuba, Yolo, El Dorado, and Placer Counties, encompassing 22 cities and serving more than 2.5 million residents. In this role, SACOG is responsible for developing the long-range plan and managing the region's Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), as well as programming federal and state transportation funds and supporting the integration of transportation, housing, and land use. In partnership with local governments, transit agencies, and state and federal partners, SACOG works to deliver transportation solutions that enhance mobility, reduce congestion, support economic development and housing production, and improve safety and access for travelers throughout the Sacramento region.

## Priorities

### **Proposal #1**

**Subject/Short Title of Proposal:** AMPO Legislative Priorities

### **Description of Proposal:**

#### **Overview**

At the Sacramento Area Council of Governments (SACOG), we plan for the future of transportation across 6 counties and 22 cities, serving over 2.5 million residents. We oversee approximately \$200 million annually in federal transportation funding, working to improve safety, reduce congestion, and support economic development. Guided by a board of local elected officials and supported by a professional planning staff, we ensure federal dollars are invested strategically to deliver transformative projects to the greater Sacramento region.

Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs), like SACOG, are federally required regional policy-making bodies responsible for developing the long-range transportation blueprints that guide critical infrastructure investments. By law, MPOs coordinate multimodal transportation plans in collaboration with local governments, transit agencies, state DOTs, and the public. This ensures that federal investments are cost-effective, locally informed, and nationally aligned.

As the designated MPO for the Sacramento region, we support several priorities from the Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations' (AMPO) legislative priorities for the upcoming surface transportation reauthorization. These priorities reflect the shared needs of MPOs nationwide and will strengthen our ability to deliver future-ready, resilient, and reliable transportation systems, including:

#### **Increase Planning Funds for Improved Project Delivery**

Planning is the foundation of effective project delivery. Despite expanding responsibilities, planning funds remain below 1% of total formula dollars. At SACOG, we are responsible for efforts such as freight coordination, congestion management, housing and land use integration, and support for resilience planning and economic development. These activities require sophisticated modeling, public engagement, and interagency coordination.

Robust planning ensures that good projects are identified early, are rooted in local and regional priorities, and have strong community support. It is the first step in the transportation pipeline, laying the groundwork for projects that are eligible for future federal investment and are more likely to succeed. Without adequate funding, critical planning efforts are delayed or scaled back, which can hinder

project readiness, affect permitting, and reduce competitiveness for discretionary funding.

Strong planning capacity also enables MPOs to implement federal requirements and advance key national goals—such as improving safety, reducing congestion, and improving system reliability. These funds are not only vital to local and regional success; they are critical to the federal interest, ensuring that billions of dollars in infrastructure investments are guided by data, shaped by community input, and aligned with national priorities.

Additionally, increased planning funds allow MPOs to modernize and innovate. Today's planning demands cutting-edge data tools, scenario modeling, and performance tracking systems to evaluate tradeoffs, measure outcomes, and improve transparency. Investments in emerging technologies, enhanced travel models, and real-time data platforms, can vastly improve how regions prioritize and deliver infrastructure. Planning funds are essential to equipping MPOs with the tools needed to bring 21st-century solutions to complex, multimodal transportation challenges.

### **More Efficiently Delivering Safety Funding**

Competitive grants like Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD), Mega Program (the National Infrastructure Project Assistance program), Reconnecting Communities, Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A) and others have been incredibly valuable to giving a wide array of stakeholders access to important federal dollars. However, the vast number of discretionary grants can take significant staffing and financial resources to meet the requirements for grant applications—with no guarantee of funding. A shift to formula-based funding for certain federal programs ensures a more predictable and equitable distribution of resources, allowing MPOs to strategically plan for the long-term growth and safety of their communities.

SS4A, in particular, should be converted to a formula program. Safety is a universal need across all types of communities - urban, suburban, and rural - and addressing it equitably requires consistent and flexible resources. SS4A plays a vital role in supplementing the Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP), enabling a broader and more holistic set of safety strategies, particularly at the local and regional level.

Directing SS4A formula funds to MPOs would allow regions to implement data-driven safety plans, coordinate across jurisdictions, and target high-risk corridors more effectively. Empowering MPOs to lead local safety investments ensures

federal funding reaches the areas of greatest need, supports the development of Safe System Approaches, and accelerates progress toward national safety goals.

### **Reducing Local Match for Federal Transportation Programs**

SACOG is tasked with developing federally required transportation blueprints that guide billions in public investment and are central to meeting national performance goals. Yet, we must secure local funds just to access the planning resources needed to carry out these obligations. For our region, this requirement can pose a recurring challenge. Reducing local match requirements for federal transportation funds will increase flexibility to address critical infrastructure needs. Reducing match requirements supports rural and economically distressed communities that struggle to access critical federal funds.

### **Proposal #2**

**Subject/Short Title of Proposal:** Efficient Infrastructure Investment Act

#### **Description of Proposal:**

Local communities across the country face a costly and avoidable problem: rebuilding roads while the aging water and sewer systems beneath them continue to deteriorate. Too often, infrastructure projects are planned in isolation, paving a road one year, only to tear it up later to replace a pipe. This disjointed approach wastes taxpayer dollars, disrupts communities, and delays private investment.

Many communities, especially small towns, rural areas, and fast-growing regions, struggle to attract new businesses or build housing simply because their utility infrastructure cannot support it. At the same time, state and local governments are under pressure to stretch limited resources while delivering results. The Efficient Infrastructure Investment Act empowers them to do both by coordinating infrastructure investments that lay the groundwork for future development and long-term prosperity.

The Efficient Infrastructure Investment Act offers a fiscally responsible solution. It allows states and metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs) to use a portion of federal surface transportation funds to improve or replace water, sewer, and stormwater systems. This approach eliminates duplication, cuts costs, and strengthens the foundation for long-term economic growth.

Modeled after the successful "Dig Once" broadband policy, this approach expands the concept to water, power, and other essential services — paving the way for new housing and economic development opportunities. The Sacramento region has embraced this "Dig Once" philosophy through an innovative program to accelerate infill development. The program is supported by all 28 jurisdictions

in the greater Sacramento region and has drawn on multiple years of engagement with utility providers, builders and other development stakeholders. This exceptional regional buy-in enhances the collaboration between transportation and other public works across not only cities and counties but also the special district utility providers that often are responsible for capital infrastructure investment. In short, the Sacramento region has built a Dig Once model from the ground up, but to date the program has had to rely on one-time, non-recurring grant funding which is fully encumbered.

Congress should allow eligibility in STBG, CMAQ, TIFIA, CRP, and any related discretionary capital grant program for associated infrastructure to better coordinate surface and subsurface infrastructure projects. This will help communities:

- Reduce construction costs and disruptions by aligning road and utility work into a single, efficient timeline;
- Accelerate job creation and economic development by preparing sites for new commercial, industrial, or mixed-use projects;
- Support new housing and commercial space production by ensuring neighborhoods have modern utility capacity and street access;
- Give local leaders the flexibility to solve infrastructure challenges with integrated solutions that reflect real-world needs.

### **Proposal #3**

**Subject/Short Title of Proposal:** Multimodal Funding

**Description of Proposal:**

Congress should provide long-term, dedicated funding for public transit and support recovery, innovation, and the sector's critical role in the U.S. economy, employing over 430,000 workers directly. Additionally, for intercity passenger rail, Congress should reauthorize key programs like Amtrak funding, the Federal-State Partnership, and the Corridor ID Program, maintaining strong, predictable investment levels to meet growing demand for new and expanded services. Advance appropriations or other multi-year funding structures will be critical to providing stability for future rail investments.

The Sacramento region continues to strengthen its multimodal network through intercity passenger rail service along the Capitol Corridor and Valley Rail networks, as well as planning and implementation of light rail and high-capacity bus services. Additionally, as the region responds to growth and new travel demands, our region's bus operators continue to balance funding to provide adequate service levels while meeting critical state of good repair capital needs.

Thank you for the opportunity to share these priorities. We look forward to continued partnership with you to advance a surface transportation program that empowers regional solutions and meets the infrastructure needs of today and tomorrow.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'J. Corless', with a stylized, cursive script.

James Corless  
Executive Director