

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

May 31, 2011

Chairman John L. Mica
Committee on Transportation & Infrastructure
2165 Rayburn House Office Building

Ranking Member Nick J. Rahall II
Committee on Transportation & Infrastructure
2163 Rayburn House Office Building

Chairman John J. Duncan Jr.
Committee on Transportation & Infrastructure
2165 Rayburn House Office Building

Ranking Member Peter A. DeFazio
Committee on Transportation & Infrastructure
2163 Rayburn House Office Building

Chairman Mica, Ranking Member Rahall, Chairman Duncan, and Ranking Member DeFazio:

As the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure drafts the new Surface Transportation Authorization, we write to strongly encourage the inclusion of the proposed Delta Development Highway System (DDHS). Additionally, we strongly recommend retaining and improving two sections of SAFETEA-LU: Delta Region Transportation Development Program (section 1308) and Comprehensive Study of Assets and Needs for All Modes of Transportation (section 1923). We believe our recommendations to be more than appropriate as the Delta Regional Authority (DRA), since its inception in 2000, has been highly successful at using its very limited federal funding to achieve improved economic outcomes.

Specifically, to date and over its nine grant cycles, DRA has invested approximately \$86 million of its appropriated funds into 610 projects, while leveraging more than \$431 million of other government funds and attracting roughly \$1.4 billion in private sector investment, for a total leverage of almost \$1.9 billion in project investments. And as a result of these DRA and partner investments, almost 50,000 jobs are being created or retained -- almost half of which are from DRA's investment into transportation projects.

Pursuant to its Congressional mandate to improve transportation infrastructure in its region, the Delta Regional Authority (DRA) prepared its Delta Development Highway System (DDHS) plan in 2007, in collaboration with its eight state Departments of Transportation (DOT) -- all of whom approved the system's corridors, projects, priorities, and planning-level costs. Specifically, as proposed, the DDHS consists of 3,843 miles of improved facilities with an estimated total system investment of \$18.5 billion over 20 years.

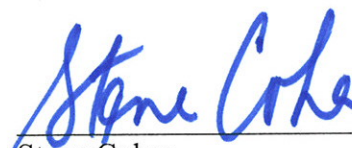
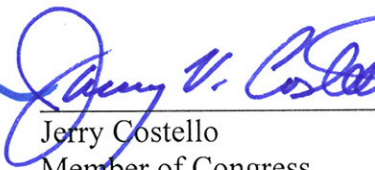

While improved economic outcomes will be realized as sections are completed, it is estimated that when fully completed, the DDHS's overall economic impact on the region will include more than 130,000 additional full-time equivalent jobs -- with an annual increase of nearly \$3.5 billion in additional income (in 2006 dollars). Importantly, that \$3.5 billion of additional annual income indicates a five-to-six year return on investment.

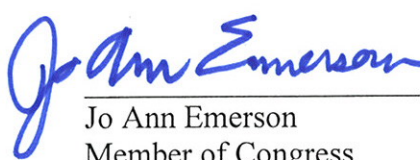
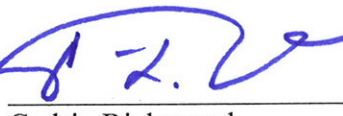
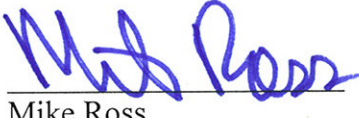
In terms of system outcomes, the DDHS will address the serious infrastructure deficiencies within the distressed Delta Region by expanding transportation facilities throughout the region's eight states, which in turn will: (1) increase mobility while lowering the costs of moving people and distributing freight, (2) improve the safety of the transportation system with respect to catastrophic natural disasters and through increased system capacity and (3) contribute markedly to the economic vitality of the region.

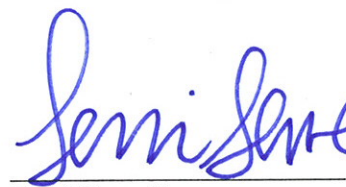
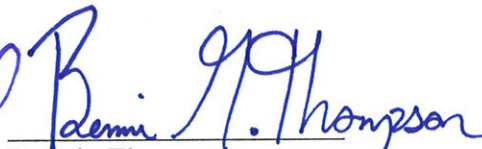
We also strongly recommend retaining two sections from SAFETEA-LU -- Sections 1308 and 1923. Further, with a few slight changes, these sections will yield much better outcomes from those investments. With regard to Section 1308, we recommend language to create collaboration between the Secretary of Transportation and the Federal Co-Chairman of the DRA, which will in turn generate greater economic returns for the region and better use of taxpayer money. In 2008, the DRA completed the Section 1928 requirement of preparing for Congress and the Administration its Transportation Assets and Needs of the Delta Region study. However, given that Congress is about to present new long-term transportation policy for the country, we recommend that the DRA be granted \$1,500,000 to prepare an updated and expanded report to Congress, and that the DRA be directed to take full measure of the new transportation policy and its opportunities for investment and growth.

Again, we urge the committee's strong consideration of our request and look forward to working with you to improve the infrastructure and prosperity of the Delta Region.

Sincerely,

 Steve Cohen Member of Congress	 Jerry Costello Member of Congress	 Rick Crawford Member of Congress
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 Jo Ann Emerson Member of Congress	 Cedric Richmond Member of Congress	 Mike Ross Member of Congress
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 Terri Sewell Member of Congress	 Bennie Thompson Member of Congress
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