

November 16, 2015

Dear Members of the Conference Committee:

The National Association of Manufacturers (NAM) urges the conference committee to quickly reach a negotiated bipartisan agreement that will authorize surface transportation legislation, initiate key reforms to improve infrastructure project delivery and reduce bureaucratic delay, increase funding levels for federal highway and transit programs and reauthorize the Export-Import (Ex-Im) Bank of the United States. Investment and updates to our nation's transportation infrastructure are absolutely essential to manufacturers' ability to compete and create jobs. A well-functioning transportation system contributes to a thriving manufacturing sector by ensuring we are the best place in the world to manufacture and attract foreign direct investment.

Manufacturers strongly support the provisions included in both the House and Senate versions of H.R. 22 that would reform and reauthorize the Ex-Im Bank. The House and Senate have already approved identical legislation by substantial margins, and the House soundly rejected amendments to the reauthorization language. The Ex-Im Bank helps level the playing field for U.S. companies seeking new sales in fiercely competitive global markets, ensuring that our nation's manufacturers can compete. The agency's charter expired on June 30, and failure to reauthorize Ex-Im is already hurting manufacturers of all sizes across the country.

Manufacturers are supportive of the overall transportation goals of both the House and Senate versions of H.R. 22. Manufacturers especially appreciate the funding levels provided by the Senate and urge conferees to robustly fund the final legislation above current baseline spending. A reauthorization bill that is shorter than six years, but accounts for inflation and other adjustments through higher funding levels would be superior to a flat-funded measure over six years. Additionally, we believe conferees should also support, at a minimum, the Senate's higher funding levels for the Transportation Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (TIFIA) program. Robust funding levels not only support modern and efficient transportation systems through traditional means but also through programs like TIFIA which enable successful public private partnerships to develop and expand transportation investments.

Attention to freight transportation systems is a highlight of both House and Senate versions. We hope that conferees will remain committed to freight transportation investments by ensuring a focus on these needed projects and programs that require dedicated resources. To that end, manufacturers strongly support the port performance provision in the Senate-passed version. Collecting basic, uniform port performance data is an essential step in ensuring that we have a ports that are equipped to handle future economic growth and increased trade. Manufacturers rely on the nation's ports to move commerce and reach 95 percent of the world's customers outside the U.S.

Additionally, manufacturers are supporters of efforts to safely increase trucking productivity and do not support the Wicker Motion to Instruct Conferees that passed the Senate on November 10. The highways link manufacturers around the country to other highways, ports, airports and railways. Efforts to improve those delivery connections amidst increases in congestion, reduced capacity and a well-documented truck driver shortage help make transportation services more efficient and manufacturers more competitive. This motion attempts to shut the door on progress and ignores data to support twin 33-foot trailers in more states than currently permitted.

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Manufacturers are pleased that both the House and Senate address environmental review and approvals by building upon the streamlining success previously achieved in Moving Ahead Progress for the 21st Century (MAP-21). Conferees must remain firmly committed to this progress and support continuous improvements to infrastructure project delivery. We urge the Senate to accept the House pilot program that provides an opportunity for a small number of states, as appropriate, to substitute state laws and regulations for federal equivalents, effectively removing an additional layer of federal bureaucracy. The more efficiently we build our infrastructure without sacrificing important environmental goals, the more infrastructure we can build.

Manufacturers strongly support several provisions that were added to the House version of H.R. 22. We encourage conferees to include the following provisions in the final agreement that address key priorities of the manufacturing community:

Federal Preemption of Trucking Rules: Manufacturing competitiveness relies heavily on transportation efficiency, especially in the trucking sector. Manufacturers support the House's clarification of intent of current law to ensure motor carriers can operate under one standard, pre-empting a patchwork of different state laws.

Facilitation of Trailer Delivery from Manufacturer to Dealer: Manufacturers support the enabling language that allows light and medium duty trailer manufacturers to make safe and efficient deliveries to dealer networks in tandem combinations by a professional Commercial Driver's License (CDL) driver. Currently a patchwork system complicates deliveries, increases fuel consumption, adds more vehicles to the roads and increases costs to consumers and manufacturers alike.

The ultimate goal of this conference committee is to ensure the core responsibilities of our interstate highways and transit systems are being met by federal, state and private partners. Funding levels that go above our current commitments would go a long way to avoid further uncertainty and ensure states have the ability to undertake multi-year and complex transportation investments such as new bridge replacements, improved interchanges, transit upgrades and additional capacity to relieve congestion that chokes our roads.

Manufacturers greatly appreciate the bipartisan effort to move both versions of H.R. 22. A well-funded, long-term transportation authorization has been an elusive goal for many years now and manufacturers welcome the House and Senate's commitment to infrastructure. Years of short, medium and long-term extensions have short-changed the potential for our nation to modernize its infrastructure base. Manufacturers encourage conferees to achieve a conference agreement as expeditiously as possible.

Ensuring the free-flow of interstate and international commerce is a federal responsibility that cannot be neglected. As the world's largest manufacturing economy, the United States requires a well-funded, multi-year investment in its transportation systems to keep us competitive with our global trading partners. Your consideration of these important issues is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,



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