NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATIONS

# WRITTEN STATEMENT FOR THE RECORD

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AND

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NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATIONS
(NADO)

BEFORE THE
HOUSE TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON HIGHWAYS AND TRANSIT

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Thank you, Chairman Petri, Ranking Member DeFazio and members of the Subcommittee for the opportunity to comment on the implementation of Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century – or MAP-21. I would also like to recognize Congressman Duncan from my home state of Tennessee.

I am pleased to be joined today by many of our transportation partners representing state DOTs, transit agencies, metropolitan planning organizations and state legislatures. My name is Terry Bobrowski. I am the Executive Director of the East Tennessee Development District, headquartered in Alcoa, Tennessee. I also serve as Treasurer of the National Association of Development Organizations (NADO).

NADO provides advocacy, education, networking and research services for the nation's 520 public-based regional development organizations. The association and its members promote regional strategies, partnerships and solutions to strengthen the economic competitiveness and quality of life across America's local communities. Each regional development organization is typically governed by a policy board of elected local government officials, along with representatives from the business and community sectors. The East Tennessee Development District (ETDD) is a voluntary association of municipal and county governments that are located in the mid-east region of Tennessee. The ETDD provides 16 counties and 56 municipalities with planning and development services while also serving as a forum for local governments to solve common problems associated with economic development and growth. This includes coordinating the activities and programs of two rural transportation planning organizations (RPO) covering areas outside of the Knoxville and Morristown Metropolitan Planning Organizations' (MPO) footprints. Our RPOs provide a forum for local consultation and ensure that rural local officials and other stakeholders have input in the state's transportation planning process.

NADO members worked closely with this Committee during the formulation of MAP-21. We again congratulate the Members of the Committee for your hard work and dedication in enacting this bi-partisan legislation. MAP-21 was truly transformational and made many

important improvements to the performance, project delivery, planning and accountability policies of the federal transportation program.

NADO remains committed to ensuring that this nation's transportation network adequately integrates the intermodal and multi-modal needs of America's communities, especially our nonmetropolitan and rural regions.

Nonmetropolitan and rural regions are focused and dependent on export agriculture, advanced manufacturing, value-added production, distribution of natural resources, alternative and renewable energy, and tourism. Many of these regions suffer from aging or inadequate infrastructure and are experiencing or preparing for dramatic shifts in their population demographics, such as community growth, aging populations or increased commuting distances and times for residents and workers.

As the Subcommittee continues to monitor the implementation of MAP-21, we would like to highlight the following three issues.

**First, Mr. Chairman, NADO is very pleased with the provisions in MAP-21 related to Regional Transportation Planning Organizations (RTPOs). MAP-21, for the first time, provides federal recognition of RTPOs for areas outside the boundaries of Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs). In addition, MAP-21 improves the participation of rural local elected officials in the statewide transportation planning process – strengthening our relationship with state DOTs.**

Under MAP-21, States may establish and designate Regional Transportation Planning Organizations to increase the planning, cooperation and implementation of statewide long-range transportation plans along with the State Transportation Improvement Program. Currently, 30 states have established some type of RTPO. *As MAP-21 is implemented, NADO recommends the U.S. DOT not prescribe a single approach regarding the structure and duties of RTPOs and instead provide flexibility so the existing national network of regional*

*transportation planning agencies does not have to undergo a complicated restructuring process.*

Let me provide you with a brief example of why RTPOs can play a valuable role in the transportation arena. In 2005, the Tennessee Department of Transportation (TDOT), in partnership with the state's nine regional transportation development organizations, formed 12 new RTPOs to complement the 11 existing Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs). The RTPOs are tasked with facilitating the input and involvement of rural elected and appointed officials in the state's planning and decision-making processes, as well as making recommendations to the state department of transportation on multi-modal transportation needs and short-term funding priorities. While TDOT is still ultimately responsible for statewide transportation planning, the RTPO process is intended to serve as the primary tool to increase local input and to pursue a more comprehensive approach to multi-modal planning in the state.

As TDOT was setting up its RTPOs and doing their initial outreach to local leaders, they were able to refine projects on the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) to use federal and state funds more efficiently on the projects that were determined to be true local needs. The RTPOs have been successful in assisting TDOT in the prioritization of projects and also with meeting their federal requirements for rural local official consultation in the statewide planning process.

NADO also supports the provisions of MAP-21 that elevate the participation of rural and nonmetropolitan local officials in the statewide transportation planning process.
The formal involvement of rural and nonmetropolitan local officials in the transportation process provides a vital link to local economic and land development planning. This underlying principle recognizes that state transportation policies and plans have an enormous impact on rural communities, especially as they relate to local economic development, land and workforce development efforts.

It is no longer sufficient for transportation planning to be focused on 'project lists' and technical needs developed in a vacuum, without regard to the local and regional challenges that arise from their development.

While often viewed as only roads and bridges, the rural transportation system actually consists of a complex and growing network of local transit services, intermodal freight connectors, regional airports, short-line railroads and port terminals. Often times, local governments are the owners, operators or partners of these transportation assets and facilities. Therefore, there is an immediate and logical need for a higher level of cooperation between state and local officials to ensure that the nation's multimodal transportation system is integrated and connected in a seamless and efficient manner. Because of their responsibility for local transportation facilities and land development decisions, rural and nonmetropolitan local officials need to have a degree of active involvement in statewide planning. MAP-21 requires States to develop a consultative process with nonmetropolitan local officials that is separate and discrete from the public involvement process.

Additionally, MAP-21 allows the Secretary to comment on the nonmetropolitan local official consultation process developed by the States. *NADO members look forward to working with our state DOT partners to implement these provisions and recommends the U.S. DOT ensure the consultation process is collaborative and meaningful.*

**A second issue NADO is closely watching during the implementation of MAP-21 relates to the use of performance measures.**

The changes in MAP-21 related to the development of national performance measures, goals and targets will transform the way in which state DOTs, metropolitan and nonmetropolitan areas make investment decisions in the future. MAP-21 focuses on overall system performance rather than individual projects. Therefore, requiring the use of

performance measurement in several key areas will help lead the planning and investment process to be even more targeted and strategic given limited federal resources.
There are no specific roles for Regional Transportation Planning Organizations in the performance measurement process established in MAP-21. However, RTPOs could be valuable partners with the state DOTs in the development of statewide performance targets. RTPOs could assist in the identification of appropriate rural performance targets for the federally defined measures and could provide critical information in performance areas such as safety and infrastructure condition.

Additionally, the RTPO planning process may be of value to the states in communicating local needs and state investment priorities – thereby assisting states in meeting their established performance targets.
State DOTs have been actively engaged in the use of performance measures for some time and in many states, rural and nonmetropolitan planning organizations have been a part of this process.

For example, Virginia's statewide rural transportation goals include supporting economic vitality through industrial access, recreational travel, and intermodal connectivity; preserving the existing transportation system to benefit the movement of people and goods; and encouraging land development and transportation coordination, among other goals.

Individual regions in Virginia adopted additional goals specific to their transportation facilities and concerns. For instance, the Roanoke Valley-Alleghany Regional Commission's goals include accommodating bicycle and pedestrian traffic, which are beneficial to regional recreation and tourism for the area situated along the Blue Ridge Mountains. For the rural areas served by the Hampton Roads Planning District Commission, providing economic opportunity for all Virginians was important; the Hampton Roads region is home to a major deepwater port.

In addition, each rural region in Virginia analyzed the performance of the transportation system in its current condition. The analysis focused on identifying priority areas and recommendations to address deficiencies in performance for those facilities.

*NADO is monitoring the new performance measurement process established through MAP-21 and the extent to which RTPOs are called upon to assist with the development of statewide performance targets.*

**And finally, a third issue we would like to highlight relates to the implementation of the freight provisions of MAP-21.**

NADO members are very interested and engaged in the issue of freight and goods movement. One of the goals of the national freight policy in MAP-21 is to "strengthen the contribution of the national freight network to the economic competitiveness of the United States". While at times the national discussion of freight issues focuses on urban areas and freight bottlenecks, it is important to remember the vital role that rural and nonmetropolitan areas play in the movement of freight across the country.

To remain at the forefront globally, it is essential that the United States maintains and expands our capacity to aggregate, process and distribute our goods, commodities and services in a timely and seamless fashion. This isn't just domestically, but increasingly, globally.

As the nation pursues new approaches to value-added agriculture, energy production and distribution, advanced manufacturing and even tourism, it is critical that we retain highly efficient and cost-effective transportation connections to small towns and rural America. While there are specific roles for U.S. DOT and state DOTS regarding freight in MAP-21, regional planning partners like RTPOs can help to link freight planning with land and

economic development decisions. RTPOs and local officials can also help identify routes within rural regions that connect multi-modal freight facilities, agriculture production, natural resource extraction sites, manufacturing, and distribution centers.
MAP-21 requires the Secretary of Transportation to consult with state DOTs and other public and private stakeholders in the development of the national freight strategic plan. *NADO recommends U.S. DOT ensure the participation and input of rural and nonmetropolitan local officials when developing the national freight strategic plan.*

In addition, MAP-21 requires the Secretary – as part of the development of the National Freight Network -to identify a primary freight network and critical rural freight corridors. MAP-21 limits the National Freight Network to no more than 30,000 centerline miles. It is possible that this mileage limitation may prevent the inclusion of important urban and rural road miles as part of the network. *Therefore, as Congress looks to build upon the freight provisions of MAP-21 in future authorization legislation, NADO would ask the Committee to examine the limitation of 30,000 centerline miles on the National Freight Network in order to determine if the number of network miles should be expanded to adequately address all of the critical metropolitan and nonmetropolitan freight routes.*

RTPOs could play a supporting role in identifying the primary freight network and critical rural freight corridors. NADO members are ready to assist state DOTs with the development of their freight plans and the identification of locally significant freight facilities, major shippers, and locally important routes in rural regions.

**In closing, Mr. Chairman, we support efforts to strengthen the coordination of federal surface transportation investments and plans more closely with regional and local community and economic development strategies, including those supported with federal money.**

We want to ensure federal transportation policy takes into consideration the vital community and economic development contributions of rural-based industries and sectors to our nation's economic, energy and national security.

As I've mentioned, NADO members will continue to work with all of our transportation partners as we move forward with MAP-21 implementation and prepare for the reauthorization next year. All of us have the same goals – to improve the quality of the transportation system in this country and the quality of life for all Americans.
Thank you again, Mr. Chairman and members of the subcommittee, for the opportunity to appear before you today. I would be pleased to answer any questions.