Dear President Biden and Secretary Buttigieg:

Last November, the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) became law. This legislation promised to deliver historic levels of investment in the country’s transportation systems, from bridges to electrification to transit. As this Administration continues the critical work of implementing the IIJA, we write to share our support for your commitment to ensuring the funding authorized by this legislation supports an equitable, safe, and climate-resilient future.

The undersigned transportation agencies build and maintain the roads, sidewalks, bike lanes, and transit routes that serve half of U.S. residents. Our agencies are responsible for implementing projects and programs created by the IIJA. We urge the White House and USDOT to follow through on campaign promises to address climate change and racial inequity, fix our crumbling infrastructure, develop high-quality and widely-available transit, and provide all Americans with a clean, safe, and resilient transportation system via the following steps:

Encourage responsible use of formula funds.

The infrastructure bill presents a once-in-a-generation opportunity to transform the nation’s infrastructure for the better. However, a business-as-usual approach to spending these funds will only exacerbate the many crises plaguing the transportation sector. If spent primarily on expanding highway capacity, transportation emissions will exceed already unacceptably-high levels and ultimately undermine greenhouse gas reduction targets. NACTO cities support the approach to spending formula funds outlined in FHWA’s December 2021 administrative guidance on implementing the IIJA. We share Deputy Administrator Pollack’s vision for a transportation network that “provides people with better sustainable and resilient to a changing climate, and is more equitable.”

Actions such as repairing existing roads over building new ones, freeing climate-friendly projects like bus and bike lanes from burdensome environmental reviews,
and flexing highway funds to transit—a longstanding but underutilized flexibility in transportation funding—can help align transportation spending to national goals and to the crises we face. We encourage the Administration to publicly track how federal formula funds are spent to promote accountability and ensure this guidance is followed.

**Reward projects aligned with national priorities.**
NACTO cities applaud USDOT’s intention to leverage over $100 billion in discretionary grant programs to advance progressive and practical transportation goals, from bringing the nation’s bridges into a state of good repair to improving safety outcomes for people walking, biking, and taking transit. The recently-announced RAISE grant winners will dedicate federal funds towards projects that directly address the safety, climate, and equity crises that America faces today while improving quality of life in communities across the country. These projects—and the process for selecting them—provide a model for the many new grant programs under USDOT’s jurisdiction.

**Fully fund promising new programs.**
Much of this Administration’s agenda rests on successful implementation of the IIJA. However, procedural challenges are hurting USDOT’s ability to disburse new funding and set up key programs, including the Carbon Reduction formula program and the Safe Streets and Roads for All discretionary grant program. We call upon White House officials to do everything in their power to broker agreement on an appropriations bill that fully funds IIJA programs at their authorized levels and allows USDOT to implement them in a timely manner. Long delays undermine the Administration and cities’ shared vision for this legislation and the potential for a cleaner, safer transportation system it holds.

The resources unlocked by the IIJA must prioritize infrastructure that is resilient to dangerous climate change, accounts for the safety of vulnerable road users, reconnects communities, enhances access to opportunity, and enables widespread adoption of zero-emission technologies. The undersigned city officials are encouraged by and applaud this Administration’s leadership to date in service of our shared goals. We strongly support further efforts in service of these priorities and will continue to support this critical work.

Sincerely,

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Austin, TX

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Director, Baltimore City Department of Transportation
Baltimore, MD

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cc:

White House Domestic Policy Council
White House Council on Environmental Quality
White House National Economic Council
Office of the Administrator, Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)