

April 16, 2012

The Honorable Barbara Boxer
Chair, Senate Committee on Environment
and Public Works
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable James Inhofe
Ranking Member, Senate Committee on
Environment and Public Works
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairwoman Boxer and Ranking Member Inhofe,

RE: Authorized Funding for Bureau of Transportation Statistics

As you consider future authorization bills for surface transportation, the undersigned groups encourage you to boost funding for the Bureau of Transportation Statistics (BTS) to the level requested under the President's FY13 Budget of \$38 million. This would be an increase from the SAFETEA-LU authorization level of \$27 million, which has been sustained under short-term extension bills since 2009, most recently at the end of March 2012.

Increased BTS funding will deliver high returns by making transportation spending and service delivery more cost-effective, boosting private sector performance and economic growth.

Transportation is integral to our economy and country, from households to businesses to government. It makes up 16 percent of consumer spending. Large corporations and small businesses alike rely on our nation's transportation infrastructure for its personnel, clients and customers and the delivery and distribution of products and supplies. Similarly, state, local and federal governments rely on the transportation infrastructure for safety, economic development, delivery of services, and workforce access.

Given the importance of transportation to our economy and our country, understanding our transportation infrastructure is imperative. The BTS is the principal source of unbiased information to help us make informed decisions about transportation investments in both the private and public sectors. Policymakers, businesses, and regulators alike rely upon the BTS for data concerning the ways in which people and goods move in our economy and how we can help them move better. As the value of goods per pound increases, and the value of time for both people and goods grow, we will need an even more responsive transportation system to be effective competitors at home and abroad.

The recent National Research Council (NRC) study on transportation data requirements, Special Report 304, states:

Transportation decision makers face a complex, changing, and uncertain environment,

yet the essential data for supporting transportation operations, policy, and investment decisions at all governmental levels and in the private sector are fragmented and incomplete in coverage and detail, lack timeliness, and are poorly integrated for analysis of current and emerging issues.

The FY13 request for the BTS contains important proposals to address issues like those raised in the NRC study. The proposed BTS initiatives include the National Long Distance Travel Data Program, a Safety Data and Analysis Initiative, the Commodity Flow Survey, the Vehicle Inventory and Use Survey, and the International Freight Data System. These will yield information that will help support and sustain America's economic recovery at a crucial time.

We understand the difficult fiscal environment but urge you to consider the immense potential returns on this modest funding boost for the BTS.

Please direct any questions on this letter to Steve Pierson, Director of Science Policy for the American Statistical Association: pierson@amstat.org; 703.302.1841.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

American Statistical Association
Association of Public Data Users
Consortium of Social Science Associations
Council of Professional Associations on Federal Statistics
Institute for Transportation and Development Policy (ITDP)

Cc: Members, House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee,
Members, Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works
Members, Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies
Appropriation Subcommittee