

CHAMBER OF COMMERCE  
OF THE  
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

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TO THE MEMBERS OF THE U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES:

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce strongly supports H.R. 3763, “the Surface Transportation Reauthorization and Reform Act of 2015 (The STRR Act),” intended to be incorporated into H.R. 22, the “DRIVE Act,” and urges the House to approve this legislation as expeditiously as practical to enable a conference committee to complete work and report legislation in time for Congress to approve it before the latest short term transportation bill extension expires on November 20.

Congress is long overdue in its responsibility for providing a long term reauthorization of the surface transportation program, which is the backbone of the American economy. We commend the leadership of the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure for taking a very important step towards providing long term certainty.

The Chamber commends the work of the Committee on Rules for setting a straightforward path for consideration of amendments to the transportation portion of this legislation. The Chamber looks forward to providing additional information about amendments beyond the infrastructure provisions of the bill once the Rules Committee has completed work on its subsequent rule for H.R. 22.

**Export-Import Bank:** The Chamber strongly supports provisions of the Senate-passed version of H.R. 22 regarding reform and reauthorization of the U.S. Export-Import Bank (Ex-Im). Last year, Ex-Im provided financing or guarantees for \$27.5 billion in U.S. exports, thereby supporting more than 164,000 American jobs at 3,300 companies. The Bank’s support has been especially important to small and medium-sized businesses, which account for nearly 90 percent of the Bank’s transactions. Not only has Ex-Im directly supported American jobs, it operates at no cost to the U.S. taxpayer. **The Chamber opposes any amendments related to the Bank because such amendments would only detract from, or run counter to, the goal of reauthorizing the Bank.**

Failure to secure a long term reauthorization of Ex-Im would amount to unilateral disarmament in the face of other governments’ far more aggressive export credit programs, which have provided their own exporters with significant financing support in recent years. Since Ex-Im’s charter lapsed on June 30, American companies have been operating at a unique disadvantage in global markets, and lost sales and lost jobs are accumulating.

Substantial reforms to Ex-Im included in this legislation have already secured overwhelming support in Congress, passing the Senate and House by 64-29 and 313-118 margins, respectively.

**Devolution:** The Chamber strongly opposes any effort to reduce investment levels in transportation infrastructure by “devolving” the federal program to state and local entities. Shifting responsibility without sufficient resources to other levels of government is an unacceptable and unworkable solution for the problems plaguing American infrastructure.

**FAAAA:** The Chamber urges provisions be added to the legislation regarding FAAAA preemption to clarify that the scope of preemption extends to state meal and rest break requirements and state bans on “piece rate” pay. Such clarification would ensure motor carriers can continue to operate efficiently and competitively, under nationally-standard federal regulations, as Congress intended, rather than being forced to adhere to a 50-state patchwork of rules governing driver hours and pay policies.

**Funding:** While the Chamber is pleased that the H.R. 22 provides the long term certainty states and local governments need to successfully implement infrastructure projects, the Chamber is disappointed that this bill does not provide full funding for the entire six year duration of this legislation.

The Chamber strongly supports stable and sufficient funding for transportation and transit infrastructure. The Chamber also believes that all options need to be on the table – including an increase in the gas tax – to expand funding in this area to meet the unmet demand for projects.

The current transportation infrastructure system is in crisis because the Highway Trust Fund does not have enough revenue provided by the gas tax to fulfill existing and expected needs. The time for Congress to address this issue is long overdue.

**Permit Streamlining:** The Chamber appreciates provisions of the Senate-passed version of H.R. 22 intended to improve the federal permitting process. However, the Chamber believes the legislation could be improved by enhancing these provisions. The Chamber salutes Reps. Marino, Goodlatte and others for continuing to work with the Senate and Administration to further refine the permit streamlining provisions, and for their longstanding leadership on this issue. The Chamber urges the Committee on Rules to allow for consideration on Rep. Goodlatte’s amendment on this issue, which is the product of these negotiations.

**The Chamber strongly supports the House amendment to H.R. 22 based on H.R. 3763 and urges the House to expeditiously approve this legislation. The Chamber may include votes on, or in relation to, this legislation, including votes on amendments related to issues provided in this correspondence, in our annual *How They Voted* scorecard.**

Sincerely,



R. Bruce Josten