THE SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20590

December 19, 2012

The Honorable Nancy Sutley
Chairwoman
White House Council on Environmental Quality
722 Jackson Place, NW
Washington, DC 20503

Dear Chairwoman Sutley:

Congress recently passed a new surface transportation authorization bill known as the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP-21). This law provides new tools that are intended to improve project delivery by enabling the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) and its modal agencies, other Federal departments and agencies, and the States to expedite important infrastructure projects without sacrificing quality.

As the President has recognized in Executive Order 13604, entitled *Improving Performance of Federal Permitting and Review of Infrastructure Projects* (March 22, 2012), our Federal permitting and review processes must provide a transparent, consistent, and predictable path for both project sponsors and affected communities. Our goal in implementing this law and this Administration's permitting reforms is to provide demonstrable improvements in the performance of Federal infrastructure permitting and review processes, including more timely and efficient decisions. Most importantly, we seek to use the environmental review process to deliver better and more sustainable projects that result in a healthier and cleaner environment.

In implementing this law, we will adhere to the following principles:

(1) DOT will implement MAP-21 in a way that utilizes the National Environmental Policy Act and other Federal environmental statutes to promote better environmental outcomes, improve transparency, and support informed decisionmaking.
(2) DOT will promote environmental stewardship, transparency, and early inter-agency consultation and collaboration as it carries out all of the new mandates included in MAP-21.
(3) DOT will encourage early collaboration among agencies, project sponsors, affected stakeholders and the public, both in the transportation planning process and in project development, to avoid adverse impacts to communities and the environment, minimize or mitigate impacts that may occur, and avoid project delay.
(4) For greater transparency and accountability, DOT will utilize cost-effective information technology to collect and disseminate information about individual projects and agency performance and to fully consider the priorities and concerns of affected communities.
(5) In developing schedules for projects, DOT will ensure that the timing for decisionmaking regarding any required actions, such as permits and licenses, must be consistent with applicable regulations governing coordinating with cooperating agencies.

(6) DOT will encourage planning and project development procedures that avoid disputes and resolve any that do arise early in the process, thus preventing unnecessary elevation wherever possible.

We appreciate the engagement and help that you and your staff have provided already to help us meet tight deadlines while producing better projects and better environmental results. We look forward to continuing our relationship while working to implement this Act.

Sincerely yours,

Ray LaHood