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March 8, 2011

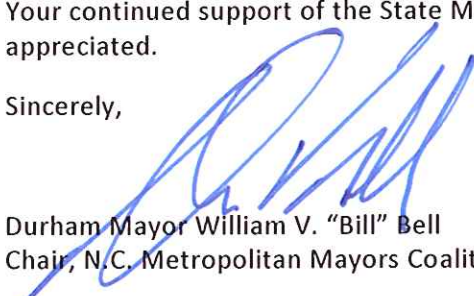
Dear Joint Transportation Appropriations Committee Member:

We understand that you are facing a difficult challenge balancing the FY 2011-12 State budget and in so doing will need to consider cuts to a variety of State programs. We, too, at the local level have had to make difficult choices over the past two years to balance our budgets and will need to do so again for FY 2011-12. However, as you consider possible cuts to State funding in support of public transportation, we would ask that you consider the following:

1. Public transportation is an important economic development tool, providing jobs for thousands of North Carolinians and critical to providing cost effective access to jobs (even more critical as gasoline approaches \$4 per gallon).
2. Public transportation plays an important role in urban areas relieving congestion on crowded streets and highways.
3. Public transportation is often the only means of transportation available to those unable to afford a car and, as such, is critical to their well-being.
4. Recommended local transit budgets for FY 2011-12 have already been submitted in most local governments and any reductions in State funding in support of local transit operations at this time would most likely result in a cut in service or an increase in local funding to maintain existing services levels.
5. Recognizing that cuts in State funding for public transportation may need to be made, we would respectfully request the following:
 - That State funding to help support the operating costs of existing transit service (State Maintenance Assistance Program – SMAP) not be reduced at this time.
 - That State funding for transit capital assistance and technology programs/purchases be spread over a two year period and/or deferred to provide an opportunity to reduce State expenditures for public transportation in FY 2011-12.

Your continued support of the State Maintenance Assistance Program (SMAP) at this time is appreciated.

Sincerely,


Durham Mayor William V. "Bill" Bell
Chair, N.C. Metropolitan Mayors Coalition

cc: N.C. Metropolitan Mayors Coalition
Thomas J. Bonfield, Durham City Manager
Mark D. Ahrendsen, Durham Transportation Director

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