COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

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March 21, 2005

The Honorable Joe Knollenberg
Chairman, Subcommittee on Transportation and Treasury, and Housing and Urban Development, The Judiciary, District of Columbia Appropriations
2358 Rayburn Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Knollenberg:

I am respectfully requesting funding for several important transportation projects that will provide immediate benefits for the Houston region in the FY2006 Transportation, Treasury, and Housing and Urban Development, the Judiciary, District of Columbia Subcommittee Appropriations bill.

I am requesting $3.75 million for the Texas Department of Transportation to build a bypass route to relieve congestion along the Energy Corridor in Houston. The money will be used to build a four lane divided roadway from Texas State Highway 6 to the Eldridge Parkway. This bypass will provide relief for employees and residents of the area from the chronically congested Interstate 10.

I am also requesting $1 million to construct a new "Trauma Access Corridor" into the Texas Medical Center, which is the world's largest medical center. Over 150,000 people travel in and out of the Medical Center every day. It is home to over 40 health care and research institutions, including the only two level one trauma centers in Houston, and employs 65,000 people in the greater Houston area. The City of Houston and Harris County have recognized the need to build a new access road to these two trauma centers and have pledged $7.5 million to start the local street improvement process.

I am also requesting $3 million for the City of Houston to improve mobility during floods. Flooding of roadways, which is common in Houston, leads to congestion, puts drivers in serious risk, and causes property damage to vehicles. Improving roadways in Houston will minimize the disruptions and hazards that occur during flooding.

I am also requesting $2 million for the City of Houston to upgrade and expand the Regional Computerized Traffic Signal System. The City is working with regional traffic management organizations to integrate traffic light coordination plans. Houston Transtar coordinates with regional traffic controllers to reduce congestion along the major transportation arteries in

Houston. Part of the solution is synchronizing traffic lights to relieve congested intersections and reduce commute times.

I am also requesting $1 million to redesign the Houston area airspace. Over the last several years, this subcommittee has committed funds to build a new TRACON in Houston. Redesigning the airspace in the Houston area will ensure that construction of the new TRACON will not be further delayed by the FAA. I also support the President's FY2006 budget request of $10.2 million for HAATS. The Houston Area Air Traffic System funds the expansion of Bush Intercontinental Airport, Hobby Airport, and Ellington Field. The HAATS program, in connection with the new Houston TRACON, will support the expanded air traffic that Houston expects in the future.

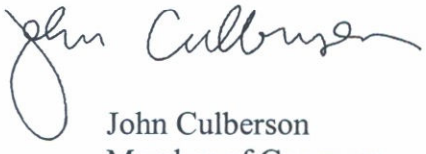
I am requesting $5 million for a pilot program that will be administered by the IRS to recover revenue lost due to diesel excise fuel tax evasion. The pilot program will involve the addition of a molecular marker to non-taxable fuel at the same time it is marked with visible red dye per IRS requirements. It is projected that one billion dollars is lost every year due to evasion of diesel fuel taxes. This pilot program will enforce current law and recover revenue that will go directly into the Highway Trust Fund.

I am also requesting $1 million for the construction of the National Nanocomposites Center at Rice University. This center will develop applications for nanotechnology across a broad range of transportation infrastructures, including bridge construction, road surfacing, and airframe development. The center will work in cooperation with other institutions in Houston that promote nanotechnology research.

I am also requesting $10 million for Houston METRO bus transit service. The funding will also be used for HOV facilities, transit centers, and park and ride lots in the Houston area. In November 2003, Houston voters approved the METRO Solutions plan. This plan called for a 50% increase in bus service throughout METRO's service area, building 9 new park and ride lots, and ensuring an all day park and ride service. This request will help METRO meet the goal of expanding bus service in accordance with the referendum.

Thank you for your consideration of these requests,

Sincerely,



John Culberson
Member of Congress