Support Economic Growth by Connecting Employers with Workers 
through public-private partnerships and regional coordination

When commuters sit stuck in traffic, the economy suffers. As commute times increase, business productivity declines, with employees spending more and more of their time going to and from their jobs rather than at work. The cost of business also rises, as employers must pay more to recruit and retain highly-skilled workers who would otherwise seek employment in a less congested area.

At the same time, unemployment can also detract from a region's economic strength. While unemployment has many causes, one commonly cited factor is lack of reliable transportation to job locations. Low-income residents are increasingly dispersed in suburban locations, requiring them to travel long distances to access jobs. In many areas, driving is the only available means of reaching job sites, but the cost of car ownership - averaging over $10,000 per year - is prohibitive for many low-income families.

Local officials and business leaders are developing innovative solutions to address these challenges. Solutions such as new transit links, employer shuttles, car pooling, car-sharing, traveler information technology, and pedestrian connections to job locations can make a real difference in regional commuting and unemployment. In many cases, employers would be eager to put their own dollars into a transportation investment to help their employees get to work if it was part of a coordinated public-private effort: in Washington State, employers contribute $18 for every dollar of public funds the state has provided for its Commute Trip Reduction program.

Ensuring that these new solutions can be implemented efficiently and do not duplicate existing services requires a coordinated regional strategy and targeted funding. However, MAP-21 leaves employers largely out of the transportation planning process, and eliminated the one program dedicated specifically to employment-related transportation, despite the clear impact of congestion and unemployment on economic growth.

**Employer Investment in Transportation and Job Connections Program**

The next transportation bill should include the Employer Investment in Transportation and Job Connections Program to provide targeted funding and technical assistance to help regions work with employers to improve transportation connections for their workforce and eliminate barriers for low-income individuals to access employment. Specifically, the Employer Investment in Transportation and Job Connections Program would:

- Establish regional employer advisory councils, with representatives of employers, transportation management organizations, and providers of job-related services to low-income individuals, to advise metropolitan planning organizations on employment-related transportation issues;
- Require employer advisory councils to develop a commute trip reduction and job connection plan for the region and recommend projects to the MPO to implement the plan; and
- Authorize funding from the Highway Trust Fund for commute trip reduction and job connection projects.