

May 1, 2009

The Honorable James L. Oberstar
Chairman
Transportation and Infrastructure Committee
2165 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Barbara Boxer
Chairman
Environment & Public Works Committee
410 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable John L. Mica
Ranking Member
Transportation and Infrastructure Committee
2163 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable James M. Inhofe
Ranking Member
Environment & Public Works Committee
456 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Oberstar, Chairman Boxer and Ranking Members Mica and Inhofe:

On behalf of our members and supporters we are writing to request that you adequately address the impacts of federal aid roads on water ecosystems in the next Transportation bill reauthorization. Specifically, we urge you to include language in the bill to require all new and rehabilitated federal aid highways and roads to meet a performance-based standard to reduce polluted stormwater runoff and flooding.

Highways and roads are a major source of stormwater runoff, which is a leading cause of water pollution in the U.S. Roads and related infrastructure comprise two-thirds of all paved surfaces. These hard surfaces are the primary source of stormwater runoff, and prevent rainfall from soaking into the ground and recharging aquifers and filtering pollutants. Roads collect pollutants from tailpipe emissions, fluid leaks, and brake linings along with other contaminants that wash into rivers and streams during storms, polluting those bodies of water. The increased runoff from these impervious surfaces also increases the possibility of flooding and sewer overflows that threaten the safety and health of our communities.

Incorporating smart stormwater mitigation strategies - such as vegetated buffers and swales, rain gardens, and permeable pavement - into road and highway designs are cost effective, reduce stormwater runoff and flooding, and can significantly extend the lifespan and capacity of sewers and treatment plants by reducing flows into these systems. These techniques are extremely effective at reducing pollutants, such as sediment, zinc, and hydrocarbons, with some techniques removing over 90% of these contaminants.

Many cities and states are already using natural practices in stormwater mitigation to avoid more costly alternatives. Seattle, Washington's Street Edge Alternatives program has reduced stormwater leaving the street by 99% through the use of vegetated swales to collect stormwater and reported a 29% savings over traditional street retrofitting and a 49% reduction in paving cost by using green techniques. California's Department of Transportation found that comprehensive use of green infrastructure to control stormwater would only cost \$2.8–7.4 billion, compared to \$44 billion for conventional controls.

We look forward to working with you to ensure that the reauthorization of the Transportation bill includes performance-based standards to reduce polluted stormwater runoff from federally funded roads and highways. Thank you for your consideration of this important issue.

Sincerely,

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CC: Members of Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works
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