

Overview of Remarks to NC FIRST Commission

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The NC League of Municipalities (NCLM) is a membership association that counts over 540 N.C. cities and towns as members—nearly every municipality in the state. The core mission of the organization is to advocate for the collective interests of cities and towns before state policy-makers. I have represented these interests for over a decade, working on numerous issues related to economic and land development, including transportation.

Several years ago, NCLM undertook an extensive, outward-facing examination of what types of activities and services it could provide municipal officials to help position them for where they want their communities to be in 2030. That work drives everything we do. And from that process, there are two relevant principles that apply in the context of our discussion today: a desire for urban and rural cooperation, and a commitment to adapt to the significant cultural and demographic changes our communities face.

Just like state policymakers, local officials want to partner in creating economically successful communities. A robust transportation system is a key to this economic success, and it is therefore a priority of both local and state policymakers. When we surveyed city officials several years back about more specific goals they wanted their transportation systems to realize, they responded by saying that they first wanted to facilitate economic development. Secondly, they wanted their transportation systems to assist in accommodating demographic shifts. And finally, they wanted their transportation systems to efficiently move goods and people not only *in and out* of the state's regional job centers, but also *within* those regional job centers.

So municipal officials have set their minds toward thinking of their transportation systems through a new lens. This lens includes transportation modes enabled by the sharing economy, such as bike share, electric scooter share, car share, and on-demand transit. It also includes a larger emphasis on multi-modalism, with each transportation project being evaluated for the inclusion of several modes of getting from here to there.

Municipal officials have also begun to seriously think through policies to accommodate increased requests to use the public right-of-way, whether it be for Internet of Things devices or other privately- and publicly-owned wireless communications devices. Many of these devices will make possible further transportation innovations, but with each new innovation will come a need for local governments to protect the electronic data generated by all the devices in the

public right-of-way. Rules will need to be created to govern the use and sharing of this data, and city officials are taking on this challenge as part of the new lens for viewing transportation upgrades.

In the meantime, municipal officials continue to push for continued state-level investment in local transportation facilities through the state-local revenue-sharing program long referred to as the Powell Bill program. In addition, municipal officials seek greater authority to build broadband infrastructure that will work alongside transportation infrastructure to contribute to the economic success of communities across the state. And city officials always support more dollars for transportation purposes, whether they be flowing directly into local coffers or remain at the state level.

As the number of ways for moving goods and people around continues to diversify, the physical transportation infrastructure that exists today will be utilized like never before. It will be stressed as our population grows. And so it will need a great deal of investment. Municipal officials are glad that the NC FIRST Commission will take a serious look at this major issue. You will likely have many concepts to weigh, including different ways to charge users for their use of the state's road network; fees on shared mobility options; toll models that promise quicker trips in return for a fee; better incentives to reduce use of roads; and local taxes and fees.

City officials stand ready to assist you throughout your examination. Thank you for the time you will dedicate to study new ideas and offer your recommendations.