November 17, 2015

The Honorable Bill Shuster
The Honorable Peter DeFazio
Transportation and Infrastructure Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable James Inhofe
The Honorable Barbara Boxer
Environment and Public Works Committee
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Shuster, Chairman Inhofe and Ranking Members DeFazio and Boxer and Members of the Conference Committee,

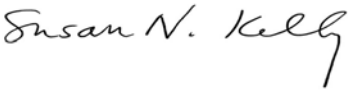
On behalf of our member utilities, we urge you to retain language included in both the House and Senate surface transportation reauthorization bills creating a working group to improve permitting and route designation for vehicles involved in emergency response and recovery.

We commend your inclusion of Section 32401 of the Senate bill, Section 5504 of the House bill, and House report language specifically mentioning utility vehicles.

Understanding how essential electricity is to the nation's well-being and the economy, utilities work hard to restore power as quickly as possible when it is disrupted. Too often, though, that restoration process is unnecessarily delayed when trucks transporting equipment needed to get power restored are held up at state borders waiting for permits. We believe this working group, if enacted, can lead to needed changes that will expedite the delivery of utility infrastructure equipment following declared emergencies.

We look forward to working with you to advance this sensible proposal and ensure that it remains in the final conference report of the surface transportation reauthorization.

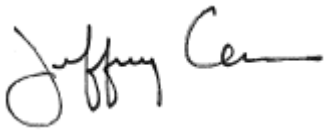
Sincerely,



Susan N. Kelly
CEO & President
APPA



Thomas R. Kuhn
President
EEI



Jeffrey Connor
Interim CEO
NRECA

cc: Members of the Conference Committee