June 3, 2013

The Honorable Ray LaHood  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Transportation  
1200 New Jersey Avenue SE  
Washington, D.C.  20590

Dear Secretary LaHood:

We write to express our full support for the FY2013 TIGER Grant application being submitted by Florida International University (FIU) and its partners: the Miami-Dade Expressway Authority (MDX), Miami-Dade County, the Florida Department of Transportation, the City of Sweetwater, Florida, and IBM. This application seeks to implement innovative transportation solutions for the University City initiative, and in turn, spur economic development in Miami-Dade County and the Southeast Florida region.

We fully understand the competitive nature of this current round of TIGER grants. As in previous rounds, the South Florida delegation remains supportive of the University City application because of its promising potential — for our region and as a model for the nation.

We believe that the University City TIGER grant application would help create robust, frequent, and smart transit options between east and west Miami-Dade destinations. By integrating a new multimodal transportation hub on the FIU Campus; Express Enhanced Bus Service on State Road-836; the deployment of state-of-the practice Informed Traveler Program (ITP); and neighborhood traffic improvements, University City will be a true aggregator of multi-modal transportation consumers.

University City is a logical geographic center for this innovative deployment that will connect communities within the region. FIU’s main campus is adjacent to both the Florida Turnpike and US-41, both major arteries for traffic flow in Miami. It attracts nearly 500,000 visitors annually, making it an important academic, social, and recreational hub in western Miami-Dade County.

A primary focus of this public-private partnership coalition is to improve the safety of neighboring residents and enhance connectivity between the Miami Intermodal Center (MIC) and the rest of the county. The coalition also aims to leverage advanced IBM software systems to decongest our crowded roadways.

Of note, FIU is also home to the Lehman Center for Transportation Research - a partner to three of the Department’s University Transportation Centers. - FIU is a leader in attracting and developing international talent that drives Florida’s growing knowledge economy. With over
50,000 students, FIU is one of the largest universities in the US and the largest Hispanic-Serving university.

As you consider how best to award TIGER grants, we respectfully request, within all applicable rules and regulations, your full consideration of this excellent proposal, which will have a positive impact on the Southeast Florida Region and the Nation. Many elements of this proposal offer great promise beyond Miami, as it will create completely new models of efficient mobility systems that directly support economic development and promote competitiveness.

Sincerely,

Mario Díaz-Balart
Member of Congress

Debbie Wasserman Schultz
Member of Congress

Ileana Ros-Lehtinen
Member of Congress

Frederica S. Wilson
Member of Congress

Bill Nelson
United States Senator

Alcee L. Hastings
Member of Congress

Joe Garcia
Member of Congress