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## United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON BANKING, HOUSING, AND  
URBAN AFFAIRS

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6075

February 25, 2009

President Barack Obama  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Obama:

I strongly share your belief that to revitalize our communities and prepare America to meet the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, we must combat climate change, reduce our dependence on foreign oil, address growing metropolitan congestion, and rebuild the nation's infrastructure. Given the federal government's history of too often approaching these issues independently of one another instead of in an integrated fashion, I encourage you to establish a White House Office of Sustainable Development, explicitly charged with developing comprehensive, integrated, solutions to these most pressing problems.

The need to address each of these issues is clear. As you know, our transportation sector is responsible for over two-thirds of oil consumption and one-third of carbon dioxide emissions. If we hope to achieve energy independence and reduce greenhouse gas emissions, we must make transportation policy a central component of our strategy. Investments in public transit, freight rail, and high-speed rail not only make our country more efficient and competitive, they also reduce carbon emissions and fuel use, create high-quality jobs, and provide the basis for long-term economic growth. You recognized this during the debate on the recently enacted economic recovery package, and I thank you for your leadership.

Such investments also play a critical role in revitalizing urban areas devastated by foreclosures, layoffs and decaying infrastructure. Our nation's population is expected to grow by 50 percent in the first half of this century, from 280 million people to 420 million. This growth will necessitate construction of over 200 billion square feet of new housing, office space and retail development, and will place additional strain on our nation's metropolitan regions and infrastructure. To accommodate this population growth, we will need smart, forward-looking land use policies that integrate affordable, efficient modes of transportation with housing and community development policies.

As clearly connected as these challenges are, federal policy dealing with each of these elements – the environment, energy, housing, community development, and transportation – is too often developed in isolation, as if in discrete silos. As chair of the Senate Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs Committee, which has jurisdiction over many of these issues, I recognize the need to coordinate intensively with other committee chairmen and colleagues to ensure we are not working at odds, but in partnership. You have already taken important steps in this direction

by appointing Carol Browner as Assistant to the President for Energy and Climate Change and Adolfo Carrion as Director of the White House Office of Urban Affairs.

An Office of Sustainable Development would take this approach a step further, by incorporating transportation, housing and urban development into our energy and climate change policies. As the 111<sup>th</sup> Congress prepares to consider potentially transformative transportation, climate change, and energy legislation, we must address our nation's future growth and development in the most comprehensive way possible. I look forward initiating discussions with senior members of your administration about how we can best work together to achieve these shared goals.

The choice is clear: America can continue policies that encourage unchecked sprawl, leading to increased congestion and energy usage, the further loss of open space, and a less competitive economy. Or we can develop our communities and our country in a sustainable way that increases the availability of public transportation, improves efficiency, and reduces oil consumption and carbon emissions, to help us meet the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. With a White House Office of Sustainable Development working with existing agencies and Congress to coordinate our housing, transportation, energy and environment policies in a holistic, comprehensive way, I am confident that together we can make the right choice.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Chris Dodd". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly stylized font.

Christopher J. Dodd  
Chairman

cc: The Honorable Ray LaHood  
The Honorable Shaun Donovan  
The Honorable Steven Chu  
The Honorable Lisa Jackson  
Ms. Carol Browner  
Mr. Adolfo Carrion Jr.