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Remarks as Delivered
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I would like to recognize all our special guests, especially Speaker Pelosi, the mayors, and Members of Congress who are with us. I am honored to be with you and to help kick-off this afternoon's program.

This Regional Assembly represents another generation of partnership between the Rockefeller Foundation and the Regional Plan Association. In 1922, John D. Rockefeller, Jr., underwrote the work of what was then called the Committee on a Regional Plan for New York and its Environs. This was a group convened to address the metropolitan region's needs and it ultimately produced the bedrock Plan of 1929.

In the 80 years since, the Rockefeller Foundation and Regional Plan Association have supported parallel and intersecting work on a number of occasions: to improve regional public transportation, to redevelop Times Square, and to build mixed income communities, just to name a few. We are also honored to work with forward-looking leaders and legislators, like Speaker Pelosi, whose bold and visionary stewardship is so evident.

Progress always starts with daring ideas. In the 20th century, the people of this region joined together, dared to think big, and built the arteries of the American economy: the Lincoln Tunnel, the George Washington Bridge, the subways, airports, and countless other triumphs of infrastructure. Pause for a moment. Think what our lives would have been like without them. So, imagine the possibilities if we dare to think big again.

And think big we must. We must invest in infrastructure on a major scale – and do so in ways that are mindful of new, 21st century imperatives, foremost of which, for us at the Rockefeller Foundation, are climate change, economic growth, and equity.

A few years ago, we provided money and muscle to the planning process that supported New Orleans' recovery from Katrina. When the storm surge submerged much of New Orleans, Americans saw, first-hand, what happens when the effects of climate change, shoddy planning, urban infrastructure failures, and abiding poverty combust and collide. In Katrina's wake, we can all appreciate – we must all appreciate – the need for robust, advance planning and focused attention on investments in infrastructure and transportation. The constellation of circumstances that aligned in New Orleans is not

unique. These same vulnerabilities fester latently in communities across the country and around the world.

But if we're intelligent, innovative, and socially conscious, we can harness forces of transportation and transformation to benefit more people, more fully, in more places. We can build 21st century infrastructure and more jobs in the process. We can develop clean, reliable, renewable, sustainable energy supplies. We can manage more sustainable patterns of growth, not just here at the heart of the world's most vibrant region, but in every region of this country and the world. We can mitigate the climate change we're causing and build stronger resilience so people aren't left vulnerable to the wrath of a world that will continue warming no matter how many Hummers are traded in for Priuses.

As we engage in this dialogue about smarter transportation and infrastructure policy, we should remember that the civil rights movement started on a city bus. The seminal question of our rights revolution was whether every man and woman had an equal right to public transportation. Our founding charter affirmed life, liberty, and the *pursuit*; it declared a right to mobility.

Our nation is stronger because Speaker Pelosi and so many of you act on the recognition that in a democracy where the crucial pathway of economic opportunity is access, transportation is not just a way to get from one place to another; it's a conduit to the American dream. My colleagues and I are proud to do our part to frame new ideas, raise awareness, and help support a diverse coalition to get the job done.

One of the Congress' leading voices in this work is Earl Blumenauer, someone we at the Rockefeller Foundation talk with, think with, work with, and deeply admire. I am delighted to yield the floor to Congressman Blumenauer, who will introduce the Speaker of the House, the Honorable Nancy Pelosi.

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