

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

June 22, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House
U.S. House of Representatives
H-232, U.S. Capitol
Washington, D.C 20510

The Honorable Peter DeFazio
Chairman, House Committee on
Transportation and Infrastructure
2165 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Chairman Peter DeFazio,

The COVID pandemic has wreaked havoc on communities across the country. State and local governments continue to face record levels of revenue losses forcing them to consider mass layoffs, reductions in critical services and cuts to public transit systems¹. As states across the nation begin the process of reopening, access to affordable, safe and reliable public transportation will be key to connecting vulnerable communities to critical jobs and services and advancing an economic recovery that leaves no community behind. We appreciate your work to include \$25 billion in investments to public transportation systems as part of the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act as well as \$15 billion in the HEROES Act to support our transit agencies across the country. While this funding is critical to providing our nation's transit agencies the much-needed resources to respond to the immediate impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, our investments continue to fall short of sustaining the growing needs that our public transit systems will face throughout this unprecedented crisis.

The economic vitality and long-term sustainability of our communities depend on a strong and accessible public transportation system. Despite this reality, transit agencies across the nation have been forced to contend with the economic fallout of COVID-19. Stay at home orders, school closures and massive layoffs have led to significant dips in ridership and revenues. Transit agency leaders have warned that many of the largest transit systems will not be able to support their regions without emergency funds to replenish these record losses². While overall ridership has markedly decreased, our most vulnerable workers who are deemed "essential" continue to rely on transit to commute to work. With ridership decreasing and tax revenues falling due to a lack of consumer discretionary spending because of high unemployment, transit agencies may not see revenue return to 2018 and 2019 levels for years.

¹ Allasan, Fadel – *Public Employees Brace for Layoffs*, May 24, 2020. <https://www.axios.com/coronavirus-state-local-layoffs-budgets-17fe78ec-5ebc-40c7-bfee-4da5dadab0344.html>

² MTA Press Release – *MTA Leads Coalition of 15 U.S. Public Transportation Agencies – Who Comprise 35% of the National GDP – Requesting Additional Emergency Federal Aid from Congress*, May 8, 2020. <http://www.mta.info/press-release/mta-headquarters/mta-leads-coalition-15-us-public-transportation-agencies-%E2%80%93-who>

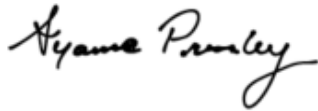
High-quality, safe and affordable public transit is a public good and will play a key role in protecting the public health and advancing our long-term economic recovery efforts. Therefore, we respectfully urge you to:

- **Invest \$50 billion per year over the next five years, to support and sustain our nation’s public transit systems.** These emergency funds would help our public transit agencies purchase more vehicles, PPE and sanitizing equipment, and hire more personnel in order to increase service to avoid overcrowding and mitigate COVID spread.
- **Incentivize transit agencies to make public transit more affordable through subsidizing fares for our most vulnerable and those disproportionately impacted by this crisis.** In response to this crisis, transit agencies have waived fare collection requirements, reducing the financial burden for riders and essential workers relying on public transit to commute to work. Federally subsidized fares would allow agencies to continue supporting riders during these difficult financial times while still covering critical personnel and operating expenses, implement health and safety measures to mitigate the spread and prevent a second wave as states reopen.

Many transit agencies have waived fare collection that has reduced the financial burden for riders and essential workers who rely on public transit to commute to work. These funds would allow agencies to continue these much-needed practices to connect essential workers to their jobs, seniors to pharmacies, and our communities who are food insecure to grocery stores and food banks.

We appreciate your urgent attention to this issue and urge you to continue your leadership on behalf of our nation’s public transit system.

Sincerely,



Ayanna Pressley
Member of Congress



Jesus G. 'Chuy' Garcia
Member of Congress



Mark Takano
Member of Congress

Signers

Nydia M. Velázquez

Alan Lowenthal

Joe Neguse

Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez

Barbara Lee

Marca L. Fudge

James P. McGovern

Jared Huffman

Raul Grijalva

Lori Trahan

Nanette Diaz Barragán

Steve Cohen

Pramila Jayapal

David N. Cicilline

Yvette D. Clarke

Jerry Nadler

Mark Pocan

Andy Levin

Andre Carson

Joseph P. Kennedy

Ann Kirkpatrick