

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

December 4, 2025

The Honorable Sam Graves
Chairman
Committee on Transportation and
Infrastructure
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Rick Larsen
Ranking Member
Committee on Transportation and
Infrastructure
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chair Graves and Ranking Member Larsen,

As you begin to finalize the Surface Transportation Reauthorization bill, we encourage you to prioritize the long-term efficiency and integrity of our nation's public transit system. In a moment when there is greater reliance on public transit, your leadership is critical to safeguard significant progress that improves our nation's transportation infrastructure. For the future of transportation, we encourage the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure to prioritize affordability, accessibility, and sustainability.

Our shared goal to lower costs for the American public is possible through meaningful investment in fare-free transit pilot programs. Fare-free transit is not just a popular policy idea, it is a proven tool for saving taxpayers money, reducing traffic congestion, and expanding access to opportunity. These benefits are especially important when we consider the unequal burden of transportation costs across income levels. According to the Bureau of Transportation Statistics, transportation costs disproportionately affect lower-income households. In 2023, households in the lowest income quintile spent 30% of their after-tax income on transportation, compared to 12% for those in the highest income quintile. Such inequities demonstrate why fare-free transit is a critical pathway to expanding access and improving operational efficiency. For example, the Merrimack Valley Transit (MeVa) system, which serves Massachusetts and New Hampshire residents, eliminated fares system-wide in March 2022, resulting in 27 MeVa buses' ridership quadrupling.¹ Increased ridership delivers broader benefits such as less traffic congestion, improved air quality, and enhanced economic opportunities. To extend these benefits nationwide, it is critical that Congress provides full support for transit agencies by covering operational costs to ensure that fare-free services strengthen system reliability.

In addition to addressing cost barriers, Congress must confront challenges with physical access, service frequency, safety, and usability for all riders. More than 25.5 million Americans self-reported having a disability that affects their ability to utilize transportation.² Although the White House's budget proposal called for deep cuts to the U.S. Department of Transportation's Federal Transportation Administration (FTA) Section 5310 Enhanced Mobility of Seniors & Individuals with Disabilities, we must authorize

¹ *Fare-Free Public Buses are Yielding Results in Southeastern MA*, (January 2025), <https://massbudget.org/2025/01/13/fare-free-srta/>.

² *How Dehumanizing Administrative Burdens Harm Disabled People*, (December 2022), <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/how-dehumanizing-administrative-burdens-harm-disabled-people/>.

funding in paratransit services to allow people with disabilities access to work, school, healthcare, and other destinations. Funding cuts would have disproportionate impacts on paratransit services and transit options in rural and underserved communities, where people with disabilities often have the fewest alternatives. Investing in accessibility provides localities and states with the necessary funding to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act and ensure riders with disabilities access to our public transit system.

Given the essential nature of mobility, it is critical that Congress invests in long-term safe, reliable, and sustainable transit infrastructure. Many of our Congressional Districts have experienced deadly public transit accidents, including instances of train malfunctions and onboard fires that underscore the need for renewed attention to safety and system upkeep. While much safer than highways, there were still over 300 transit-related fatalities in 2023.³ These events are a clear indication that further investment is necessary to modernize our infrastructure and better protect passengers. Furthermore, outdated systems contribute significantly to harmful emissions, highlighting the urgency of transitioning to cleaner, more efficient technologies. These interconnected challenges deserve meaningful attention. Hence, we request the Committee make investments that will help future generations benefit from our public transit infrastructure.

We respectfully ask that you consider these priorities as you craft the Surface Transportation Reauthorization bill. The decisions made in this legislation will shape the daily lives of millions of Americans and determine whether our transportation system is prepared to meet the challenges of the future. We urge you to invest in public transit as a public good by advancing policies that improve affordability, accessibility, and sustainability.

Sincerely,



Ayanna Pressley
Member of Congress



Mark Takano
Member of Congress



Jesús G. "Chuy" García
Member of Congress

³ASCE's 2025 Infrastructure Report Card. "US Public Transit Infrastructure, (March 2025), <https://infrastructurereportcard.org/cat-item/transit-infrastructure/#:~:text=In%202023%2C%20there%20were%20327,compared%20to%20the%20previous%20year.>



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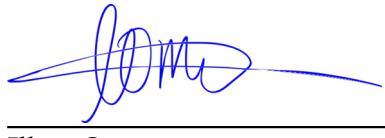
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