

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

June 6, 2025

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

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

Dear Chairman Graves and Ranking Member Larsen,

As your committee takes on the important work of the next surface transportation reauthorization, I respectfully urge that you include the following priorities in the surface transportation legislation:

Highways and Transit

1. Fare-Free Transit Pilot

Recommendation: Provide \$10,000,000 for the establishment of a pilot program for state transportation departments to support the planning, implementation, or expansion of fare-free public transit pilot programs. The benefits of fare-free transit include reduced road traffic, improved access to work and school, and enhanced opportunities for economically disadvantaged populations. States are encouraged to prioritize funding for transit agencies serving communities with high concentrations of low-income residents and to ensure that fare-free policies are inclusive of all modes of public transportation, including ADA complementary paratransit services.

2. Seek Parity Between Highway and Transit Spending

As the Committee considers structural changes to surface transportation funding and seeks to address the Highway Trust Fund shortfall, greater parity between modes should be considered.

For decades, Congress has chosen an 80-20 percent ratio to fund highways and transit, respectively. This ratio first arose in 1982 when a negotiated gasoline and diesel fuel excise tax increase of 5 cents-per-gallon included an agreement that 1 cent of that increase, or 20%, would be deposited into a new mass transit account within the highway trust fund. Subsequent gasoline and diesel fuel excise tax increases in 1990 and 1993 would maintain this 20% set aside for mass transit programs. This 80-20 percent ratio would later be applied to total funding authorizations. Between 1983 and 2003, total funding authorizations for mass transit programs averaged 19.7% of total authorizations.

The next surface transportation reauthorization bill should spend an equal amount between highway and mass transit programs. Some 28 million people rely on buses, trains, and

streetcars to get them where they need to go, and over 60 percent of public transit riders are people of color. In addition, over 1 million rural households do not have access to a car and are reliant on public transit to access jobs and other essential services. A shift towards more mass transit spending would be transformational in large and small communities nationwide.

The 40-year-old 80-20 ratio is no longer responsive to the priorities of our nation's transportation system and should be replaced with a ratio of 50-50 for highways and transit, respectively.

3. Preserve Discretionary Grant Funding

To complement the certainty and impact of formula grant programs, Congress should continue to provide discretionary funding opportunities that prioritize the needs of regions and local communities. Congress should also maximize the value of these programs by focusing on efficiencies and simplifying grant requirements that will expedite project delivery.

4. Support Local Decision-Making Through Formula Programs

Congress should continue and enhance the impact of the Surface Transportation Block Grant (STBG) program by increasing the amount of funding that is suballocated to local areas. STBG emphasizes the importance of the local-state federal intergovernmental partnership by suballocating formula funding to support local decision-making and locally owned infrastructure.

5. Increase and Enhance Metropolitan Planning Funding

Congress should increase PL funding and ensure MPOs of all sizes are able to conduct critical planning activities. This includes reducing or eliminating local match requirements to ensure all communities can utilize planning resources. With increased PL funding, MPOs will be better able to support local communities and increase the efficacy of federal dollars through long-range planning and project development

6. Charging and Fueling Infrastructure (CFI) (FHWA)

Recommendation: Reauthorize and fund the Charging and Fueling Infrastructure (CFI) program to expand EV and alternative fuel stations in underserved communities and along designated corridors. Ensure flexibility in deployment to meet varied local and regional needs. (IIJA Sec. 11401)

7. Improve Highway and Road Safety

The United States has the most dangerous roads in the developed world. U.S. roads are particularly dangerous for people outside of a car. In 2022, the number of people struck and killed while walking grew to 7,522, a 40-year high. The next surface transportation reauthorization should prioritize safety in all federally-funded transportation projects.

This prioritization of safety should include continued support for efforts to achieve zero deaths on our nation's roads, increase funding for the Safe Streets and Roads for All program, establish a competitive grant program to install nets and barriers to reduce suicide, provide flexibility to use Highway Safety Improvement Program funds to cover

the local cost share of Transportation Alternatives Program safety projects, and support other programs and initiatives designed to improve safety in our transportation system.

8. Strengthen Emissions Reductions Programs

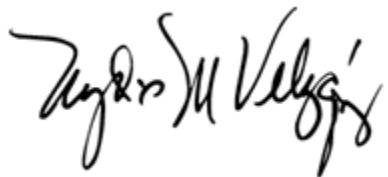
The transportation sector is the largest contributor of greenhouse gas emissions in the United States. These emissions significantly contribute to climate change. Additionally, communities of color and low-income populations are disproportionately impacted by transportation-related pollution, leading to health problems including asthma, respiratory illness, and cardiovascular disease. However, the Trump Administration has undermined efforts to address transportation sector emissions, rescinding fuel economy standards and other rules that reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

The next surface transportation reauthorization should prioritize programs that reduce harmful emissions and accelerate the adoption of zero-emission vehicles. This includes through the expansion of investments in zero-emission medium- and heavy-duty vehicles and charging infrastructure and preserving programs that encourage the use of zero emission vehicles - including the Low or No Emission Program, Bus and Bus Facilities Program, and Clean School Bus Program.

Additionally, the next surface transportation reauthorization should reauthorize and improve the National Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Program to deliver a comprehensive and convenient charging network.

Lastly, the next surface transportation reauthorization should reform the Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) Program. Today, less than half of all CMAQ projects have any discernible emissions reductions. Specific reforms to CMAQ should include modifying eligibility, preventing the transfer of funds to programs that may increase emissions, requiring states and MPOs to revise investments if plans are increasing emissions, and any other changes that would allow CMAQ to better target emissions reductions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Nydia M. Velázquez". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Nydia" and last name "Velázquez" clearly distinguishable.

Nydia M. Velázquez