

March 4, 2021

Honorable Jon Tester  
311 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington DC 20510

Dear Senator Tester:

We write as Montana transit and public transportation stakeholders to express our strong support for H.R. 1319, the “American Rescue Plan Act of 2021.” This bill provides \$30.5 billion in critical COVID-19 emergency funding for public transit agencies.

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to drive home the essential role that public transit plays every day. In Montana, public transportation systems serve thousands of people ranging from Billings, Missoula and Great Falls to the Northern Cheyenne and Salish and Kootenai Tribes and the Blackfeet Nation via bus and van. For many people, public transit is the only way to attend medical appointments, get groceries or carry out other vital activities of day-to-day life. Data show that our combined public transportation services carry out more than 2.8 million passenger trips and travel more than 7.4 million passenger miles each year.

If Congress and the Administration do not provide significant additional COVID-19 emergency transit funding, many public transit agencies will be forced to cut service and lay off or furlough employees. According to a January 2021 American Public Transportation Association (APTA) survey of public transit agencies, four in 10 agencies will have to consider additional service cuts to close their budget gaps. Similarly, 22 percent of agencies will be forced to consider implementing additional layoffs.

These funds are also critical to maintain the manufacturing and supply chain for public transportation agencies and limit the enormous economic damage to these businesses caused by the pandemic. According to a January 2021 APTA survey of public transit industry businesses, 76 percent of businesses have seen a reduction in their transit industry business because of COVID-19, and nearly four in 10 businesses (38 percent) will be forced to consider additional layoffs. Moreover, one of every five businesses (22 percent) is concerned that they may go out of business due to the pandemic.

We hope that you will support the \$30.5 billion COVID-19 emergency funding for public transportation. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Barbara Stiffarm, Executive Director  
North Central Montana Transit  
Havre

Colleen Pankratz, Manager  
Valley County Transit  
Glasgow

Rusty Logan, Transit Manager  
City of Billings MET Transit  
Billings

Sheryl Raddas, Coordinator  
Park County Windrider Transit  
Livingston

John Engen, Mayor  
Missoula

Bob Kelly, Mayor  
Great Falls

Kristen Galbraith, Director of Grants &  
Special Projects  
Park County  
Livingston

Corey Aldridge, CEO & General Manager  
Mountain Line (Missoula Urban  
Transportation District)  
Missoula

Warren Blackman, Transit Director  
Blackfeet Tribe  
Browning

Casey Valenica, Advocate  
University of Montana  
Missoula

Glenda Hanson, Director  
Liberty County Agency on Aging/Liberty  
County Transit  
Chester

Barbara Schneeman, VP Communications  
& Public Affairs  
Riverstone Health  
Billings

Tia Metzger, Client Services Director  
Windfall  
Missoula

Henri Headress, Transit Director  
Fort Peck Tribes  
Poplar

Jodi Berry, Director  
Richland County Transportation  
Sidney

Jordan Hess, City Council Member  
Missoula

Juanito Vero, County Commissioner  
Missoula

Jonathan Karlen, Chairman  
Transportation Oversight Board,  
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Shanti Johnson, Communications,  
Outreach & Marketing Specialist,  
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We Are Montana  
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Amy Cilimburg, Executive Director  
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Leslie M. Hunter, Administrator  
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Lora Wier, Executive Director  
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Choteau

C.B. Pearson, Senior Vice President  
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Missoula