



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

June 15, 2020

Dear Chairman DeFazio,

The Pierce County Public Transportation Benefit Area Corporation (Pierce Transit) writes to express its strong support for the *Investing in a New Vision for the Environment and Surface Transportation in America (INVEST in America) Act* (H.R. 7095), which was introduced by the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee. We are thankful for the \$105 billion investment, as well as the proposed reforms and flexibilities, that this legislation would provide for public transit. *The INVEST in America Act* will address immediate needs stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic and provide a long-term strategy to carry the national transit network into the future; we urge swift passage of the \$494 billion legislation in the U.S. House of Representatives to ensure the short- and long-term stability of the American transportation system.

Pierce Transit provides fixed route, paratransit, and vanpool service to Washington State's second largest county, over 292 square miles and roughly 70 percent of the county population. Our organization, like all other transit agencies nationwide, has suffered greatly as a result of the coronavirus pandemic. We estimate that reduced sales tax revenues and loss of fare box revenue have resulted in \$47 million in financial losses in 2020. Moving forward, we anticipate further depletion of our reserves. However, Pierce Transit must continue our mission of providing service for essential workers and others dependent on transit for access to jobs, education, healthcare, and food. Approximately 67% of our ridership live in households with an average income of \$35,000 per year and 41% of our riders do not own a vehicle. In addition, 59% are female and 40% identify as non-white. This is an equity issue.

We appreciate that the *INVEST in America Act* would provide increased funding for Fiscal Year (FY) 2021 and remove non-federal share requirements. We understand that \$83.1 billion would be available to states, cities, tribes, territories, and transit agencies in the next fiscal year. New eligibilities to use federal funds to cover agency salaries and operating expenses will help us weather this storm and preserve our local jobs. Our dedicated workers deserve that security, especially following their efforts during COVID-19 pandemic.

Pierce Transit is grateful for the significant investment in the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Grants for Bus and Bus Facilities Program, making up for past cuts. We support the reimagining of the program to address fleet replacement and modernization needs. Proposed policy reforms and new grant programs will advance the emissions reduction and sustainability goals that Pierce Transit has long championed.



We support the Committee's proposed reforms of the Capital Investment Grant (CIG) program that would streamline the approval process, incentivize lower cost share, and provide greater transparency throughout the review process. Those improvements will facilitate Pierce Transit's implementation of a 14.4-mile north-south Bus Rapid Transit service along the Pacific Avenue-SR 7 transit corridor through the Small Starts Project Development Phase of the CIG program.

The INVEST in America Act recognizes our immediate needs to continue providing essential transit service throughout the pandemic, while envisioning the recovery of the transit industry and the vitality of our country moving forward. It also provides a comprehensive framework for the Senate to consider and hopefully adapt as leaders of the Senate Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs Committee work to draft the transit title that is necessary to supplement the *America's Transportation Infrastructure Act (ATIA)* passed by the Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works.

Congress must pass a long-term reauthorization before the expiration of the *Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act of 2015* at the end of September. Federal action is required to help us most effectively support our most vulnerable communities, and to provide the transit industry with necessary flexibility and long-term certainty during these terribly uncertain times. Thank you for your leadership offering the *INVEST in America Act*. We appreciate your partnership at the federal level.

Sincerely,



Sue Dreier
Chief Executive Officer
Pierce Transit

