



REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

Metropolitan Planning • Public Transportation & Operations • Engineering & Construction

Metropolitan Planning Organization of Washoe County, Nevada

June 16, 2020

The Honorable Peter DeFazio
Chair
Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
U.S. House of Representatives
2134 Rayburn Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman DeFazio,

On behalf of the Regional Transportation Commission of Washoe County (RTC), I write to express support for the timely passage of a surface transportation reauthorization bill. The recently introduced Investing in a New Vision for the Environment and Surface Transportation (INVEST) in America Act (H.R. 2) is a positive and important step forward in providing the necessary investments in our Nation's transportation infrastructure and critical support of transit services in this challenging time.

We support the INVEST in America Act, and the additional highway and transit funding in Fiscal Year (FY) 2021 and approach to the use of those funds to assist in covering operating expenses, payroll expenses of our front-line workers, and offsetting significant lost revenues and local sources of funding. We want to voice our strong support for select provisions, specifically:

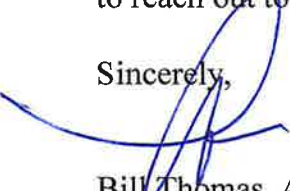
- \$8.3 billion for FY 2022-2025 for Buses and Bus Facilities formula and discretionary programs, and zero-emission bus grants.
- Expansion of eligibility under the Safe Routes to Schools Program to include high schools.
- \$750 million in discretionary highway funds for direct allocations to MPOs to advance locally selected projects.
- Increased funding for the Transit Oriented Development Planning Grant Program and expanded eligibility to include high ridership bus corridors.
- In FY 2021 an additional \$14.742 billion in contract authority from the Highway Account above FY 2020 levels.
- In FY 2021 an additional \$5.79 billion in contract authority from the Mass Transit Account above FY 2020 levels; allowing funds obligated in FY 2021 to be up to 100 percent federal share and used for both operating and capital expenses.

After reviewing the bill, we would like to comment on certain provisions and recommend slight modifications to existing language to better serve transportation interests in Nevada and across the country.

- The INVEST in America Act requires The U.S. Department of Transportation to use 2019 National Transit Database (NTD) figures for Fiscal Year (FY) 2022 formula funds apportionments and distributions. RTC requests 2019 NTD figures to be used for both FY 2022 and FY 2023. Public transit systems across the country will likely have continued revenue and ridership impacts as a direct result of the COVID-19 pandemic and possibly witness a prolonged hesitancy of some riders to return to using these services. These performance indicators are not reflective of the true transit needs in our community, and therefore a two-year hold on NTD figures for formula funds as we recover is requested.
- The INVEST in America Act changes the existing Federal Transit Administration's 5339(c) Low or No Emission Vehicle Program to a Zero Emission Vehicle Grant Program, and establishes minimum procurements for this program. RTC, and many agencies, are looking toward hydrogen fuel cell bus purchases; however, given the new technology, need to make small purchases to ensure its proper integration into the fleet. RTC requests that the procurement of hydrogen fuel cell electric buses be excluded from the minimum purchase requirements. In addition, the RTC suggests that grantees have the flexibility to purchase "low" emission vehicles to allow for the acquisition of hybrid vehicles with these funds.

Thank you for considering these two important amendments to the INVEST in America Act. We greatly appreciate your leadership and continued commitment to ensuring our industry is supported as we emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic and continue to enhance our systems. Please feel free to reach out to me directly with any questions or requests for additional information.

Sincerely,



Bill Thomas, AICP
Executive Director

Cc: Congressman Mark Amodei
Congresswoman Dina Titus
Congressman Steven Horsford
Congresswoman Susie Lee