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ASSOCIATION

March 3, 2017

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The Honorable Thad Cochran
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Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Rodney Frelinghuysen
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Patrick Leahy
Vice Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nita Lowey
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Cochran, Vice Chairman Leahy, Chairman Frelinghuysen, and Ranking Member Lowey:

On behalf of the more than 1,500 member organizations of the American Public Transportation Association (APTA), I urge the Senate and House Appropriations Committees to finish the bicameral, bipartisan negotiations on full-year fiscal year (FY) 2017 appropriations needed to fund the Department of Transportation. The funding levels for federal transit programs should be no less than those authorized by the Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act. It is crucial that Congress pass full-year funding, instead of another continuing funding resolution (CR), before the current CR expires on April 28, 2017. Federal public transportation programs provide economic and critical mobility benefits for Americans and American businesses across the country – every \$1 invested in public transportation generates approximately \$4 in economic returns.

We appreciate the work that has been done in both the Senate and House toward completing the FY 2017 appropriations process. Last year, the FY 2017 Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies (THUD) Appropriations bills that advanced in both chambers fully funded Highway Trust Fund programs under the FAST Act. This includes critical funding of \$199 million to install positive train control (PTC) systems at commuter rail systems. The deadline for installation of PTC is fast approaching, and while our members have made significant progress, these funds will help to speed that important process. The PTC money comes from the Highway Trust Fund, is fully paid for under the FAST Act, and should be appropriated as soon as possible. PTC on the nation's rail systems will make safe systems even safer and enhance the efficiency of passenger and freight rail as demand for both continues to rise.

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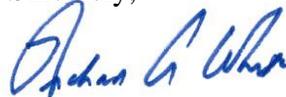
We also strongly support the funding level of \$2.5 billion for Capital Investment Grants included in the House THUD bill. Until a full-year appropriations bill is enacted, the FTA cannot allocate funds for these critical investments. With transit ridership growing faster than both population and vehicle miles travelled since 2004, these funds help transit systems expand and grow to meet the increasing demand for quality service. There is a robust pipeline and thorough selection process for these worthy projects – which include New Starts, Small Starts, and Core Capacity projects – that justifies funding this program at the House level. We also urge Congress to fully appropriate authorized funding for the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) to ensure safe, efficient, and reliable transportation in our nation's capital.

Additionally, increased federal funding to support commuter, intercity, and high-speed passenger rail service continues to be a priority for the public transportation industry. Enhancing our national passenger rail network with connections to other modes of public transportation expands mobility options and is essential to economic growth. APTA urges Congress to fully fund the Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements Program, the Federal-State Partnership for State of Good Repair Program, and the Restoration and Enhancement Grant Program and Amtrak programs consistent with the FAST Act. We oppose a legislative provision in the bill approved by the House committee that limits funding for the development of high-speed and intercity passenger service.

In conclusion, we want to emphasize the importance of passing full-year funding rather than another stop-gap funding measure, which would cause funding uncertainties and delay the distribution of federal resources. Delaying federal resources has far reaching impacts beyond government programs and operations, with 70 percent of government funding for public transit flowing through the private sector and supporting millions of jobs. Additionally, for every \$1 billion invested in public transportation, 50,000 jobs are created. We urge Congress to get the job done quickly, and help millions of Americans who depend on public transportation to get to their jobs.

Thank you for your consideration of our priorities for the FY 2017 Appropriations bill. We look forward to continuing to work with Congress to expand and improve access to public transportation in communities throughout the nation.

Sincerely,



Richard A. White
Acting President & CEO

cc: The Members of the Senate and House Committees on Appropriations