



Membership

- Asotin County Transit
- Ben Franklin Transit
- C-TRAN
- Clallam Transit
- Columbia County Public Transportation
- Community Transit
- City of Ellensburg
- Everett Transit
- Garfield County Public Transportation
- Grant Transit Authority
- Grays Harbor Transportation Authority
- Intercity Transit
- Island Transit
- Jefferson Transit
- King County Metro
- Kitsap Transit
- Link Transit
- Mason Transportation Authority
- TranGo
- Pacific Transit
- Pierce Transit
- Pullman Transit
- RiverCities Transit
- Skagit Transit
- Sound Transit
- Spokane Transit Authority
- Twin Transit
- Valley Transit
- Whatcom Transportation Authority
- Yakima Transit
- WSDOT – Division of Public Transportation

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,

I write today on behalf of the Washington State Transit Association (WSTA) in support of the *Investing in a New Vision for the Environment and Surface Transportation in America Act* (H.R. 2), known as the *INVEST in America Act*, introduced by the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure. Our mission is to enhance public transit for the citizens of Washington State. We believe that this \$494 billion legislative proposal – and its \$105 billion investment in transit – will support the short- and long-term needs of our 31 member agencies. This five-year reauthorization will better position our industry and communities to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic and economic downturn, while making critical investments in our nation’s transit systems and reforming our policies to address future needs. We urge swift passage of this bill by the U.S. House of Representatives on behalf of the urban, suburban, and rural ridership that our transit agencies serve.

We appreciate your efforts to provide robust federal funding and new flexibilities during Fiscal Year (FY) 2021 in response to the economic downturn caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. This legislation would provide \$83.1 billion to states, territories, tribes, cities, and transit agencies in the next fiscal year. Building upon the CARES Act, this additional relief and stimulus would represent a critical investment in our systems and our national economy. We welcome the newly eligible uses of federal funds to cover salaries and operating expenses, preserving transit jobs across Washington State. Transit workers deserve that security in recognition of their contributions to the ridership and community throughout this pandemic.

The *INVEST in America Act* would make historic investments in our bus systems, providing an increase of 150% for the Federal Transit Administration’s Bus and Bus Facilities Program to help make up for past

cuts. Policy recommendations will help our agencies to maintain a state-of-good-repair and replace and modernize fleets and facilities. The legislation will help us to address a growing backlog of maintenance needs. We understand this would reimagine the Bus and Bus Facilities Grant Program to focus solely on bus facilities and fleet expansions, creating a new state of good repair subgrant from the formula program. It also provides a significant increase in federal investment of zero emission buses under the former Low-No Program.

Our agencies applaud the Committee's provisions that would allow current Capital Investment Grant (CIG) projects to be authorized with increased Federal cost share. Given our dependence on sales tax, this would help sponsors avoid issues resulting from projected decreases in State and local revenues previously designated as non-federal cost share. We recommend that this flexibility is afforded to all CIG projects entering project development phase in 2020-2021. We also support proposed reforms to streamline the CIG approval process, provide greater transparency, and affirm the 80% federal cost share requirement while incentivizing lower cost share to those who can provide it.

We are pleased to extend our support for the *INVEST in America Act*. This legislation will help our agencies to meet the growing demands of ridership, increase access, and ensure equitable outcomes for all communities. Furthermore, the bill will help the industry to maintain and create good paying jobs, expand our domestic manufacturing, and grow the national economy as we recover. The policy provisions will help us address other long-term challenges like increasing the resiliency of our assets, reducing emissions, and improving air quality. It also supports innovation, responding to advances with Mobility on Demand (MOD), autonomous vehicles (AVs), and electric vehicle (EV) infrastructure.

This bill offers a comprehensive framework for the Senate to consider as it finalizes its surface transportation reauthorization bill. We encourage leaders of the Senate Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs Committee to adapt many of these legislative provisions for their transit title. The Senate must put forward a transit title to accompany 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* (P.L. 114-94) in September 2020.

We appreciate your leadership offering the *INVEST in America Act*. This legislation will provide our member agencies with the funding, flexibility, and long-term certainty necessary during these terribly uncertain times. WSTA encourages the House to swiftly pass this bill and the Senate to act on a comprehensive reauthorization package. Thank you for your partnership at the federal level.

Sincerely,



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