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COMMITTEE ON RULES
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COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND LABOR

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

May 1, 2019

Chairman Peter A. DeFazio
House Committee on Transportation
and Infrastructure
U.S. House of Representatives

Ranking Member Sam Graves
House Committee on Transportation
and Infrastructure
U.S. House of Representatives

Dear Chairman DeFazio & Ranking Member Graves,

I write today as the representative for the 25th Congressional District in the State of New York, and the employees and customers of the Rochester Genesee Regional Transportation Authority (RGRTA). I also write as a member of the Bipartisan Congressional Bus Caucus in support of robust federal investment in our nation's public transit systems and infrastructure.

Bus transit systems, like RGRTA in Rochester, New York, continue to struggle because of the reduction in funding in the Bus and Bus Facility program. Between 2009 and 2017, the percentage of transit buses operating past their 12-year useful life increased 47 percent, while the percentage of buses operating longer than 15 years increased 97 percent. At the same time, our nation's bus fleets contracted by 18 percent. This is what happens when older buses are decommissioned and resources are not available to replace them.

This has a significant effect on our constituents who ride the bus. Fewer buses means fewer routes, less reliable service and increased maintenance costs. This means it becomes more difficult for people to get to work, school, and medical appointments. All of these factors have contributed to declining bus ridership for RGRTA and transit systems across the country. The team at RGRTA does a fantastic job providing public transit to the communities they serve, but because of factors like these, their ridership has suffered, declining from more than 18 million in 2014 to just under 16 million today.

To address this crisis in bus transit, I urge this committee and all of my colleagues to support increased funding for public transit as we develop an infrastructure bill and reauthorize the FAST Act.



Congress should embrace a robust infrastructure bill that includes \$7.42 billion in funding for bus transit programs over the ten-year life of the bill. This level of funding would replace the approximately 15,500 buses that are currently operating past their useful life. This funding level would also create approximately 260,000 jobs, increase reliability, and significantly decrease the greenhouse gas impact of running older, less efficient buses.

As we begin discussing the reauthorization of the FAST Act, we should look beyond funding levels that simply replace old and dirty buses, and champion the kind of investment that will help RGRTA and other systems modernize and expand service. A range of investment tied to NTD data will help these systems bring bus transit up to a more acceptable state of good repair. That data suggests it would take an additional \$6.4 billion to address the 18 percent decline in bus fleet size. When adding together the needs of transit between an infrastructure bill and a reauthorized FAST Act, there is a clear need of \$13.82 billion to address the bus crisis in this country. To understand the full extent of this crisis, consider that this number does not even reflect the significant disinvestment in facilities, smaller buses and paratransit service.

If we take into consideration this range of funding over the six-year life of the next reauthorization bill, this is what the investment range would look like from FY21 to FY26:

Fiscal Year	FY 2021	FY2022	FY2023	FY2024	FY2025	FY2026
Funding Request	\$1.24b - \$2.3b	\$1.27b - \$2.3b	\$1.31b - \$2.37b	\$1.35b - \$2.41b	\$1.39b - \$2.45b	\$1.43b - \$2.49b

Investing in public transit has an undeniable ripple effect that is felt in neighborhoods throughout New York and across the country. Investing in public transit is also an investment in jobs, economic development, education, health care, small businesses, and the environment.

Thank you for considering my testimony. I look forward to working with you and the committee to invest in the future of our nation.

Sincerely,


Joseph D. Morelle
Member of Congress