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1ST DISTRICT, ILLINOIS

COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND COMMERCE

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The Honorable Bobby L. Rush
Member Day Written Testimony
House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee
May 15, 2019

Chairman DeFazio, Ranking Member Graves, and members of the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony about our nation's infrastructure priorities.

Having robust and well-funded infrastructure is critical to my district as well as to the entire country.

Chicago and its surrounding suburbs are home to five major interstates, multiple regional and Class I railroads, intercity and commuter rail services, inland waterways, aviation facilities, and major intermodal freight yards.

Public transportation is also extremely important to my constituents. The Service Boards — which are made up of the Chicago Transit Authority (CTA), Metra Commuter Rail (Metra), and Pace Suburban Bus, including Pace Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Paratransit Service — make up the third largest ridership in the country and the second largest transit system in the country by passenger miles traveled. The system covers approximately 3,700 square miles and serves more than eight million residents, including many of my constituents.

Federal investments in efficient and high-quality transportation systems are linked with economic development in these communities.

As such, as the Committee considers the reauthorization of the federal surface transportation programs as well as other infrastructure packages, I ask that you keep the following priorities in mind which are important to my district:

- Ensure predictable and robust funding for the Highway Trust Fund to ensure long-term solvency.
- Promote and fund the Capital Investment Grant (CIG) Program, which includes New Starts, Small Starts, and Core Capacity, at levels at least as high as those codified in the Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act.
 - For this program, geographic diversity should not be a factor in project selection by the Department of Transportation (DOT) and the core capacity funding category should be enhanced to include projects that expand or modify existing station facilities

- Additionally, I encourage you to ensure transparency by requiring the DOT to establish a CIG program dashboard that is publicly available and includes information on projects and their status.
- Prioritize transit funding programs and financing options, including:
 - Large and steady funding to the State of Good Repair (SGR) program and Urbanized Area formula funding to address the \$100 billion backlog for public transportation. This backlog is currently growing by \$2.5 billion each year.
 - Restore tax exempt advanced refunding on municipal bonds.
 - Expand incentives for public transportation systems and local governments to utilize value capture as an investment tool.
 - Codify the Transportation Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (TIFIA) as counting as part of the local match for federally supported projects, as well as also being issued at 49 percent of a project's cost if a sponsor requests that level.
 - Provide financial assistance for the credit risk premium of a Railroad Rehabilitation & Improvement Financing (RRIF) loan application to encourage more of these projects.
 - Reauthorize eligibility for Transit-Oriented Development under RRIF loans.
 - Ensure dedicated resources for commuter rails to:
 - Help with the implementation costs associated with Positive Train Control (PTC); and
 - Provide annual funding assistance for PTC operations and maintenance.
 - Authorize Amtrak capital dollars at least at the level authorized by the FAST Act.
- Encourage rapid innovation in mobility technology through federal funding and analysis.
 - Integrate and utilize accessible mobility options in the U.S. transportation system to help vulnerable populations such as disabled, older, and underserved Americans.
 - Expand pilot programs that look at innovative ways to coordinate access and mobility of vulnerable populations.
 - Compile data resulting from the use of many mobility modes (including scooters, electric bikes, and transportation network companies like Uber and Lyft) into a larger database to provide state and regional planners vital information on ridership data.
- Incentivize Public Transportation Ridership.
 - Expand the transportation fringe benefits — also known as the “Commuter Tax Benefits” — and restore employer’s ability to deduct the cost.
- Ensure that freight funding is dedicated, sustainable, and flexible.
 - Funding should include incentives and rewards for state and local investment, leverage public and private financing, and include fees for owners of goods who are the primary beneficiaries of system improvements.
- Improve transparency of the DOT’s Infrastructure for Rebuilding America (INFRA) Grant Program, so that applicants are able to understand how the DOT is prioritizing funding and what makes an application successful.
- Authorize funding for critical regional projects, including the widening of I-80 and improvements to the Laraway Road Corridor in my district, as well as funding for surface transportation projects that target freight system improvements.

- Additional priorities for funding increases include the freight formula program and competitive freight grant program, as well as the Surface Transportation Block Grant Program (STBGP).

Thank you again for the opportunity to submit testimony on our nation's infrastructure priorities as part of this year's Member's Day. I look forward to continuing to work with you on these important issues.