

United States House of Representatives  
Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure

Member Day Testimony  
Provided by Congressman Michael F.Q. San Nicolas (GU-00)

Wednesday, April 14, 2021

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Chairman DeFazio, Ranking Member Graves, and Members of the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, Good Afternoon and thank you for your work in advocating to build a stronger infrastructure system and transportation network for Americans across our country. While this Committee undertakes the important task of reauthorizing our federal government's surface transportation spending you also are providing a transformative opportunity to enhance the quality of life for our Americans living in the United States territory of Guam.

Similar to the rest of the country, Guam has critical infrastructure needs in the area of road repair, with a decade-old Highway Master Plan pricing needed improvements at over \$600MM. Many of our public schools date back to the post WWII era, with at least half a dozen in need of replacement and all requiring long overdue maintenance overhauls at an overall price point estimated at \$1.1B. Our public hospital that serves not just Guam but the entire region of Micronesia as the primary medical care facility has over \$700MM in deferred maintenance needs as determined by the Army Corps of Engineers, and is in dire need of critical overhaul or preferred outright replacement.

Guam wishes to put these on the record for the Committee as considerations are made for the allocation of additional transportation and infrastructure resources. Clearly these overdue investments are not problems unique to Guam, and we look forward to full formulaic inclusion as similarly afforded to all of our other States and Territories in these particular areas.

As a particular focus, to include Member Designated Projects funding, I wish to highlight the need for investment in the public transportation system on Guam, which comprises only of a bus services operation. With a population of 180,000 people occupying 212 square miles, Guam is more densely populated than 48 other U.S. States. Factoring in the fact that we have (pre-pandemic) more tourists per capita than anywhere else in the country (1.9MM/180k), and that we are relocating \$8B worth of military infrastructure in the transfer of a Marine Base and 12,000 personnel and dependents from Okinawa to Guam, this Committee in its expertise and experience would be undoubtedly shocked at what we currently are calling public transportation on Guam.

Today Guam has only 26 buses in the fleet, with 19 of them focused on disability and veteran services and only 7 servicing an island-wide route. We have only 10 bus shelters throughout the entire island, leaving tens of thousands isolated, and none of these shelters are properly climatized for the weather conditions on Guam making wait times impractical. It takes over an hour for a bus to arrive based on agency reports. Our transit operation does not have a maintenance facility capable of meeting current fleet needs nor to meet true fleet demand with an increased number of busses in service. Additionally, the system does not have a centralized operations center, with multiple divisions scattered in different locations.

Further exacerbating transportation realities on Guam is the fact that vehicular travel is more prohibitive as gas prices are at \$4.30 per gallon, taxi fares are too expensive for everyday use, and the absence of national rideshare service providers such as Lyft or Uber have small local operators trying to fill the gaps.

Members of the Committee, we need direct and substantial investment in the Guam public transportation system. We need to centralize operations, establish sustainable maintenance capacity, and increase our fleet and bus shelters tenfold. This will mobilize our economy, help people to be gainfully employed, promote a healthier community with greater access to food and medical care, lower carbon emissions, reduce traffic congestion (and enhance the useful life of federally funded roads), and properly showcase to our international visitors that America is not immobilized.

A priority of this Committee is for non-urbanized parts of the country to be afforded equal attention and equitable funding to achieve its needs. Clearly the lack in public transportation on Guam, especially given our circumstances, challenges, and demographics, present a clear opportunity for this priority to be made whole by funding these projects for Guam and ensuring that no American is left behind.

The people of Guam thank this Committee for the opportunity to present our circumstances, and look forward to your just and favorable consideration.