

July 14, 2021

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House
U.S. House of Representatives
H-232, U.S. Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
S-221, U.S. Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Majority Leader Schumer:

As negotiations on infrastructure continue, we are writing to articulate our shared priorities for the transportation portion of any legislation addressing infrastructure. Any final bill must address two of the most significant challenges facing our nation today: **climate change** and **racial equity**. The transportation sector is the largest generator of greenhouse gas emissions in the United States, and a lack of safe, accessible, and affordable transportation has cut many Black and brown neighborhoods off from economic opportunity. To meet the moment, we need bold federal action, such as provided for in the INVEST Act, to modernize our transportation policy.

Although we would be pleased if it went even farther, the INVEST Act takes a comprehensive approach to climate and equity, incorporating those goals into virtually every aspect of the federal transportation program. We recommend that the INVEST Act be considered the base text for any transportation bill. However, if the Surface Transportation Reauthorization Act (STRA) reported by the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee is to be considered in a legislative package, the following provisions must be added.

No final bill is complete without the following policies:

- **Comprehensive performance measurement framework.** The performance measures required by current law have failed to yield a cleaner, more equitable transportation system. We need to prioritize measures that align with those goals. With transportation the top source of pollution driving climate change, transportation planners should track the greenhouse gas emissions impacts from proposed projects. To ensure that transportation is providing equitable access to opportunity, regardless of zip code, income level, or disability, agencies should be measuring how well their systems connect people to jobs and essential services. States and metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs) should be setting targets for improvement and prioritizing projects consistent with those targets. The INVEST Act establishes such a framework and provides new funding and incentives to help states and MPOs track and improve their performance on these critical goals.
- **Highway-level commitment to transit, including funding for operations.** For the past forty years, transit has received only \$1 for every \$4 that has gone to highways. This imbalance has led to inadequate transit service, skewing consumers' transportation decisions toward solo

driving. Transit funding must be significantly increased to reach the highway level. The INVEST Act makes a down payment toward parity between highways and transit and includes two new programs – the Transit Deserts and Carbon Reduction Programs - that can be used to support better transit service, a goal that is also advanced by Rep. Hank Johnson’s Stronger Communities through Better Transit Act (H.R. 3744).

- **Focus federal highway funds on maintenance.** The nation faces a road repair backlog of \$435 billion, yet federal highway funds are not dedicated to this purpose. Instead, states can use federal dollars to build or expand highways even as existing roadways fall into disrepair. Before states can add road capacity and thereby encourage more driving, they should be required to create a plan for maintaining any new road as well as the rest of their system (as the INVEST Act would require for projects using funds from the National Highway Performance Program).
- **Zero emission vehicle facilities and infrastructure.** Federal policy should support deployment of charging and fueling infrastructure for all zero emission vehicles (including scooters, bikes, cars, buses, and trucks) that ensures access to public charging in all geographies as well as charging at all types of homes and businesses, with particular attention to communities facing transportation-related pollution burdens, low-income communities, and communities of color. Transit agencies and local governments will also need support to transition to zero-emission fleets, including funding for facilities and workforce training. Building out the EV charging network necessary to support the transformation of the U.S. vehicle fleet is estimated to take \$40 billion. STRA authorizes only \$2.5 billion for fueling and charging infrastructure and includes natural gas fueling, which is not zero-emission, while the INVEST Act includes over \$36 billion for electric vehicle charging infrastructure, and dedicates a portion of that funding for infrastructure in underserved communities.
- **Reconnecting Communities program.** It is past time to fix the historic damage wrought by urban highway construction that has divided Black and brown communities. Dedicated funding is essential to right those past wrongs and tie communities back together, while ensuring that current residents benefit from the improvements and are not displaced. STRA includes a small program (\$500 million over five years) for this purpose, but additional funding is needed, as recognized by the \$20 billion included for this purpose in the American Jobs Plan.
- **Safe streets for all.** Our roads and highways are becoming increasingly dangerous for those outside of a vehicle, especially Black people and Native Americans. Congress should provide significant investment in safer infrastructure for those who bike, walk, or roll and require updated roadway design standards that provide safe accommodation for all. While STRA includes new funding for biking and walking infrastructure and requires transportation plans to include active transportation, we also need provisions from the INVEST Act which prevent states from diverting bicycle and pedestrian funding for other purposes and from setting safety targets under which traffic deaths would increase.
- **A stronger role for local governments.** Cities are hotbeds of innovation in transportation, yet they are not directly eligible for over 99 percent of federal transportation funding, which is mostly channeled through state DOTs and to a lesser extent MPOs. The INVEST Act provides local governments with greater authority over the design and selection of projects within their borders and additional opportunities to directly receive federal funds.

Transportation legislation must also maintain environmental safeguards by preserving and enforcing our nation’s bedrock environmental protections rather than sacrificing them in the name of infrastructure “streamlining.” The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) remains a critical federal screening mechanism to ensure that climate, environmental, and community impacts are considered and raises the

voices of overburdened communities in project decisions prior to them being finalized. NEPA, which was signed into law by President Nixon and remained largely unchanged during the tumultuous recent era of environmental rollbacks, must remain intact. This is not the time to undo 50 years of progress and cut communities out of decision-making.

For too long, the impacts of our transportation investments on climate and communities have been overlooked, with disastrous consequences. Transportation legislation must face these issues head-on. Fortunately, the solutions we have identified will also create good-paying jobs, improve public health outcomes, and deliver a better quality of life for all Americans. We stand ready to work with you to ensure that these essential elements are part of any final package.

Sincerely,

1000 Friends of Oregon

5th Square

Active San Gabriel Valley (ActiveSGV)

Active Transportation Alliance

Alliance for a Just Society

Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU), Local 268

Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU), Local 308

Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU), Local 627

America Walks

Association of Oregon Rail and Transit Advocates (AORTA)

Better Bus Coalition (Cincinnati, OH)

Better Eugene-Springfield Transportation (BEST)

Bicycle Coalition of Greater Philadelphia

Bike Pittsburgh

Business for a Better Portland

Center for Climate Change and Health

Center for Disability Rights

Center for Neighborhood Technology (CNT)

Central Maryland Transportation Alliance

Central Ohio Worker Center

Church World Service

Clean Air Council
Clevelanders for Public Transit
Climate Action Campaign
ClimatePlan
Coalition for Clean Air
Coalition for Smarter Growth
Coalition of Communities of Color
Communities Actively Living Independent & Free
Consortium to Lower Obesity in Chicago Children
Cottage Village Coalition
Cuyahoga County Progressive Caucus
DC Transportation Equity Network
Denver Streets Partnership
Drive Electric RVA
East Coast Greenway Alliance
East Metro Strong
Employment & Employer Services (E&ES)
Environmental Law & Policy Center
Faith Alliance for Climate Solutions
Foundation for Homan Square
Friends of Caltrain
Genesis
Go By Bike Shop
Greater Greater Washington
Green New Deal Virginia
GreenLatinos
In the Public Interest
Inland Empire Biking Alliance
Innovation Ohio
Institute for Transportation and Development Policy (ITDP)

InterReligious Task Force on Central America
Joy Machines Bike Shop
kctPLAN
LA Forward
Labor Network for Sustainability
League of American Bicyclists
League of Conservation Voters (LCV)
League of Women Voters of Lane County (Oregon)
Lewinsville Faith in Action
LivableStreets Alliance
Madison Area Bus Advocates
Metropolitan Planning Council (Chicago)
Move LA, a project of Community Partners
Move Minnesota
Move Redmond
National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO)
Native Organizers Alliance
Natural Resources Defense Council
Neighbors for Clean Air
Nelson\Nygaard
New Jersey Future
No More Freeways
Northeast Ohio Black Health Coalition
Ohio Conference of the American Association of University Professors
One Fair Wage
OPAL Environmental Justice
Oregon Environmental Council
Oregon Walks
Participatory Budgeting Oregon
Partnership for Smarter Growth

Pittsburghers for Public Transit
Planning and Conservation League
PolicyLink
PSOB Bike Committee
Rail Passengers Association
Rails-to-Trails Conservancy
Respiratory Health Association
Ride Report
Rise and Resist Elevator Action Group
Roanoke Group, Sierra Club
ROCUNITED
Safe Routes Partnership
Santa Barbara Bicycle Coalition+Coalition for Sustainable Transportation
SEIU Local 1 in Ohio
Shenandoah Valley Bicycle Coalition
Sierra Club
Sierra Club, Georgia Chapter
Sightline Institute
Silicon Valley Youth Climate Action
Southeast Sustainability Directors Network
Southern Environmental Law Center
Southwest Energy Efficiency Project
Sports Backers - Bike Walk RVA
SPUR
Streets for All & Bike Culver City
Sunrise Ohio
Sunrise Movement PDX
Sustain Charlotte
The National Campaign for Transit Justice
The Piedmont Environmental Council

The Reno + Sparks Chamber of Commerce
The Street Trust - Greater Portland Oregon
The Wilderness Society
Transit Alliance Miami
Transit Coalition
Transit Forward Philadelphia
Transit Riders of the US Together
Transport Workers Union of America
Transportation Choices Coalition
Transportation for America
Tri-State Transportation Campaign
Ulupono Initiative
Unitarian Universalist Justice Ohio
Urban Greenspaces Institute
Verde
Virginia Bicycling Federation
Virginia Organizing
Virginia Transit Association
Virginians for High Speed Rail
Warehouse Workers for Justice
Washington Area Bicyclist Association
Welcome Home Coalition

Cc: Sherrod Brown, Chair, Senate Committee on Banking, Committee on Housing and Urban Affairs
Maria Cantwell, Chair, Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation
Tom Carper, Chair, Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works
Peter DeFazio, Chair, House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure