

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

November 17, 2015

The Honorable James Inhofe
The Honorable Barbara Boxer
Chairman and Ranking Member
U.S. Senate Committee on Environment
and Public Works
410 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Bill Shuster
The Honorable Peter DeFazio
Chairman and Ranking Member
U.S. House Transportation and
Infrastructure Committee
2251 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairmen Inhofe, Shuster and Ranking Members Boxer, DeFazio:

As the House and Senate conferees come together to craft an agreement on long-term highway reauthorization legislation, we respectfully request that you accept the Bus and Bus Facilities Competitive Grant Program included in the House-passed extension. While this grant program is included in the Senate highway companion, the House provision better addresses the needs of all bus transit systems in America.

Under MAP-21, Congress eliminated this grant program which had provided essential bus funding to most bus transit systems across the country. Since then, there has not been a Bus & Bus Facilities program with sufficient funding to make it possible for bus systems in America to meet their minimum state of good repair needs. In many cases, systems are running buses on the street well beyond the Federal Transit Administration's standard for usable life.

The House provision gives all 50 states and all transit systems an equal opportunity to compete for funds. Specifically, the house bill provides \$2.72 billion relative to the \$1.12 billion in the Senate bill. The increased funding provided by the House comes from eliminating the High Density program which currently provides directed funds for seven Northeastern states. However, contrary to recent media reports, the House provision does not prevent these seven states from receiving the same level of funding as they currently enjoy – they could get even more. These states would simply be required to justify their needs along with every other system applicant.

Over half of all transit riders take buses every day for work, errands, medical appointments, or to visit family and friends, and that percentage continues to increase annually. As a result of being shortchanged for federal funding, older, higher-mileage buses are being used longer, maintenance costs are escalating and service is becoming less reliable. A national need demands a national program.

We urge all Members of the Conference Committee to support their bus transit systems by agreeing to the House-passed Bus and Bus Facilities Competitive Grant Program or by otherwise altering the Act to properly fund buses and bus facilities nationwide.

Sincerely,



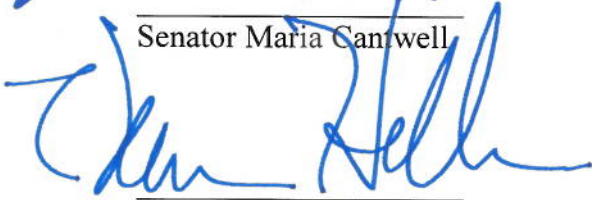
Senator Jerry Moran



Senator Roy Blunt



Senator Maria Cantwell



Senator Dean Heller



Senator Tom Udall



Senator Joe Donnelly



Senator Richard Burr



Senator Chuck Grassley



Senator Jeff Merkley