



November 12, 2014

The Honorable Barbara Mikulski  
Chairman  
Senate Committee on Appropriations  
S-128 Capitol  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Harold Rogers  
Chairman  
House Committee on Appropriations  
H-307 Capitol  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Richard C. Shelby  
Ranking Member  
Senate Committee on Appropriations  
S-146A Capitol  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nita M. Lowey  
Ranking Member  
House Committee on Appropriations  
1016 Longworth House Office Bldg.  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairmen Mikulski and Rogers, and Ranking Members Shelby and Lowey:

On behalf of the 1,500 member organizations of the American Public Transportation Association, I urge you to strengthen Federal investment in public transportation systems in communities nationwide as you work to complete appropriations bills in advance of the December 11, 2014, expiration of the current continuing resolution (CR).

While we support the CR's extension of appropriations at fiscal year 2014 authorization levels for the transit formula programs funded from the Highway Trust Fund, both record-high transit ridership and our growing backlog of system preservation needs make clear that significant increases in authorizations for our trust-funded programs are warranted in the next surface transportation authorization bill.

Our general-funded programs, including the very popular Capital Investment Grants (New Starts) program for new or expanded public transportation service, also remain vital components of the Federal public transportation program and must be robustly funded.

While State and local contributions pay for half of New Starts project costs, the success of the major, multi-year capital projects already approved under this program is dependent upon reliable and sustained Federal support. As demand for New Starts grants outpaces current resources, the pipeline of new projects awaiting Federal funding continues to grow. To realize the promise of these transformative capital projects to improve communities and spur job creation, New Starts investment must increase.

We urge you to fund the transit research and technical assistance and training accounts to amounts more in line with their historically-funded levels. Federal support for transit research and training is a strategic investment of Federal dollars where they can do the most good for all sectors of the transit industry, through initiatives to develop industry-wide standards based in sound science and to foster and sustain a highly-skilled transit workforce. We are particularly concerned about the detrimental impacts of cuts to the Transit Cooperative Research Program (TCRP), which is the industry's premier program of applied research to address challenges common to transit agencies. The House-passed transportation appropriations bill would reduce TCRP funding to just \$1 million. This cut would cripple the transit industry's ability to advance research that addresses myriad technical issues underpinning our collective commitment to operating the safest, most efficient transportation systems possible.

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*President & CEO  
Michael P. Melaniphy*

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We support strong, sustained Federal funding for intercity and high-speed passenger rail. With the recent announcement of increased ridership and record-high ticket revenues for FY 2014, Amtrak has shown that, while riders are doing their part at the ticket booth, greater public investment in rail infrastructure is needed to meet Americans' burgeoning demand for intercity passenger service. We therefore support the higher level of Amtrak capital grants included in the Senate Appropriations Committee bill.

An underutilized yet potentially valuable source of Federal assistance for passenger rail projects is the RRIF (Railroad Rehabilitation and Improvement Financing) program, which provides below-market rate Federal loans to rail project sponsors in both the public and private sectors. Appropriating Federal funds to pay the credit risk premiums of RRIF loans would remove a significant financial hurdle preventing many smaller rail properties from accessing the RRIF program and would bring RRIF in line with the highly-successful TIFIA credit program for highway and transit projects. An annual appropriation of \$50 million could support \$1 billion in RRIF loans each year.

Since 2009, TIGER discretionary grants have been a significant source of funding to advance a broad range of transit, rail, road, and port projects. We therefore oppose the House bill's provision that would exclude transit and rail projects from competing for a share of this national, multi-modal program in this fiscal year.

Finally, we urge you to advance a bill free of riders that restrict public transportation or rail investments, including the provision restricting the alignment of a Houston-area project seeking New Starts funding. Congress should resist legislating changes to project specifications at this level of detail, and should not undo the lawfully-arrived-at locally preferred alternative (LPA). Congress should respect the laws and regulations that establish the public involvement processes and the project selection processes. Otherwise no part of those processes will be free from Federal micromanagement and interference.

We look forward to working with you in the coming weeks to ensure robust Federal funding for critical investments in our communities' public transportation and intercity passenger rail systems in the forthcoming appropriations legislation.

Sincerely,



Michael P. Melaniphy  
President and CEO

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