

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

March 22, 2020

Speaker Nancy Pelosi
H-209, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy
H-232, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Peter A. DeFazio
Chairman
Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
2167 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Sam Graves
Ranking Member
Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
2164 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Nita M. Lowey
Chairwoman
Committee on Appropriations
H-307, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Kay Granger
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
1016 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Leader McCarthy, Chairman DeFazio, Ranking Member Graves, Chairwoman Lowey and Ranking Member Granger:

As you work diligently to craft a stimulus package to respond to the economic impact of the COVID-19 epidemic, we ask that you ensure the appropriate policies are in place to foster a speedy recovery once this crisis is behind us. In particular, we urge you to consider critical support for public transit agencies and include provisions that will allow them to return to normal operations while continuing their important, stimulating capital projects.

As you know, public transit agencies around the country are facing immediate, enormous funding gaps due to sharp declines in ridership due to mandatory shelter-in-place orders and cautionary social distancing. In some cases, nearly 90% declines in ridership, combined with plummeting sales-tax receipts, have resulted in multi-billion-dollar revenue losses, much of which will simply never be recouped. These fiscal constraints have left public transit agencies without the funding needed to maintain their operating budgets – even as they significantly scale back service to match the decline in demand.


If the forthcoming stimulus package does not include financial assistance for public transit agencies, they will be forced to cannibalize their capital programs to support their operating budgets. That means that once this crisis is finally over, important infrastructure projects that provide thousands of jobs and promote economic development for dozens of communities and businesses around the country will feel extended negative impacts, inhibiting the ability of our economy to rebound. We therefore urge to you to provide swift assistance to transit agencies to support their operating budgets,

which in turn will support the thousands of transit workers who are providing critical services even as most Americans stay isolated at home.

Additionally, as you craft this stimulus package, we urge you to include provisions that hold public transit agencies harmless when it comes to traditional federal formula funding. Most formula funding provided by the Federal Transit Administration is allocated based on annual ridership statistics. So it will come as no surprise that the jurisdictions most severely affected by COVID-19 will suffer long-term losses if their significantly-reduced 2020 ridership statistics are used to calculate future funding. In most cases, these formulas are set forth in law and therefore can only be resolved through changes in statute. We therefore hope you will include language that protects public transit agencies from suffering a secondary crisis as our economy finally recovers from the impacts of the COVID-19 outbreak. While immediate resources are needed across the board, we must keep in mind the need to ensure our economy can bounce back as quickly as possible.

We know you are working around the clock and in a bipartisan fashion to respond to this crisis, and we appreciate your attention to this issue at this critical time.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Adriano Espaillat', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Adriano Espaillat
Member of Congress

ADDITIONAL SIGNATORIES

Jesús G. “Chuy” García
Sean Patrick Maloney
Alan Lowenthal
Janice D. Schakowsky
Donald S. Beyer Jr.
Andy Kim
Jerrold Nadler
Joe Neguse
Rick Larsen
Jared Huffman

Sylvia R. Garcia
Donald M. Payne, Jr.
Carolyn B. Maloney
Sharice L. Davids
Barbara Lee
Brian Higgins
Eleanor Holmes Norton
Max Rose
Stephen F. Lynch
Salud O. Carbajal