

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

Sept 10, 2020

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Senate Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Democratic Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

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

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Leader McConnell, Speaker Pelosi, Leader Schumer, and Leader McCarthy:

We write to you today requesting targeted federal infrastructure investments as the country recovers from the economic consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic. As you are aware, the impacts of this health and economic crisis have taken an incredible toll on our local governments who traditionally spend substantial portions of their budgets on infrastructure and their local workforce. We need to act swiftly to assist in making sure we can get the country back to work, back safely, and back on a solid economic footing. Transportation projects have shown the ability to promote economic growth, create jobs and help prepare communities for a safer future.

Therefore, we are requesting that we provide a significant investment in federal transportation programs that meet local transportation needs. We request these funds be provided to local areas of all sizes; and we ask that these funds be provided at 100% federal share given the depletion of local budgets from COVID-19. In addition, we request that you include these additional policy recommendations:

- **Provide additional funds to metropolitan, regional, and rural planning organizations through the Metropolitan Planning program, Federal Transit Administration planning funding, and the State Planning and Research Program.** Additional and robust funding can help ensure they are able to continue their important regional efforts that support the public health response and prevent staffing losses that could hamper the expenditure of recovery funds over time. Collectively, local transportation planning organizations anticipate tens of millions of dollars in unanticipated spending from additional expenses in IT, sick time and health care costs, lost productivity, and project delays. These funds should be provided at 100% federal share for the duration of the National Emergency Declaration, to reduce the burden on local areas and to ensure the availability to utilize these funds during times of critical challenges to local budgets.
- **Utilize the Surface Transportation Block Grant Program (STBGP) (23 U.S.C. § 133)** under the federal-aid highway program and public transportation program which provides flexible local and state support for transportation programs. Remove local match

requirements for the duration of the National Emergency Declaration so federal funds can cover 100% of a project's costs.

- **Allow funds provided in any relief or recovery bill to be used as the local share funds for any program**, including STBGP, Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ), and Metropolitan Planning. Allowing new funds to be used to match other program funds would help ensure speedier project delivery.
- **Waive all restrictions under 49 U.S.C. § 5307 on the use of funds for operating expenses for the remainder of fiscal year 2020 and fiscal year 2021, or until the National Emergency Declaration is lifted.** During this period, allow federal funds to be used for 100% of project costs.
- Encourage the Federal Highway Administration, Federal Transit Administration (FTA), and others to **liberally grant extensions to organizations for requirements** such as long-range transportation plan approvals, Transportation Improvement Program, Unified Public Work Program, FTA triennial reviews, quadrennial certifications, invoice processing, and other relevant deadlines that occur during fiscal years 2020 and 2021 and provide up to one year after the National Emergency Declaration is lifted for compliance.
- **Extend deadlines for discretionary grant programs**, including obligation deadlines, so recipients are not penalized with the loss of their grant due to an extended period of slowdown or stoppage of required work.
- **Provide flexibility to states and MPOs to update required performance targets and set new targets** as appropriate to adequately reflect the anticipated conditions.
- **Provide appropriate flexibility on federal deadlines and requirements that may be impacted by the COVID-19 crisis** including the MPO CMAQ Performance Plan, which is currently due on October 1, 2020.

We support these policy requests, along with multiple national organizations, including: the National Association of Development Organizations, the National Association of Regional Councils, the Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations, the National League of Cities, and the National Association of Counties.

We look forward to working with you to support transportation investments to assist in the safety and job creation that much needed infrastructure projects provide to all of our communities at this time.

Sincerely,

/s/ Catherine Cortez Masto
United States Senator

/s/ Tom Carper
United States Senator

/s/ Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator

/s/ Ron Wyden
United States Senator

/s/ Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator

/s/ Sheldon Whitehouse
United States Senator

/s/ Jacky Rosen
United States Senator

/s/ Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator

/s/ Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator

/s/ Sherrod Brown
United States Senator

/s/ Edward J. Markey
United States Senator

/s/ Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator

/s/ Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator