



March 8, 2018

The Honorable Susan Collins
Chair
Committee on Appropriations
Transportation and Housing Subcommittee
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Jack Reed
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
Transportation and Housing Subcommittee
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Mario Diaz-Balart
Chair
Committee on Appropriations
Transportation and Housing Subcommittee
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable David Price
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
Transportation and Housing Subcommittee
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chair Collins and Diaz-Balart and Ranking Members Reed and Price:

On behalf of The Bus Coalition's (TBC) membership of over 145 small, medium, and large transit agencies spanning 39 states and the Community Transportation Association of America's (CTAA) 1,200 small city, rural, tribal and specialized transit operations, we encourage you to dedicate a portion of the additional \$68 billion in FY 2019 non-defense spending to restore funds to the Federal Transit Administration's Bus and Bus Facility (BBF) competitive grant program.

Specifically, we support using less than 1% of the additional funding (\$661.9 million) for the Bus and Bus Facilities (BBF) program to restore the competitive grant program to SAFETEA LU funding levels in FY19. FTA's recent competitive grant bus program was significantly oversubscribed 10 to 1 with more than \$2.5 billion in requests for \$227 million available to award. The allocation of \$661.9 million would provide significant resources to address this backlog. The recent solicitation demonstrates plenty of demand to justify this increased level of investment. In addition, an investment of this size would create approximately 24,500 jobs.

Buses are the backbone of transit service across America. More than one-half of all transit trips are carried by buses. We are very concerned about the state of our rural, suburban and urban bus transit systems. Between 2009 and 2016, the number of transit buses operating past useful life (12-years) increased nearly 40% and the number of buses operating more than 15 years increased a

staggering 92%. At the same time, total bus fleets contracted by 15% highlighting the impact of budget cuts on bus transit systems across the country. The decreased level of investment, older bus fleets, higher maintenance costs and reduced level of service is taking its toll on bus ridership.


This need is also acutely felt by America's rural transit providers, who – while facing an overall decline in population – have experienced a 7.8% increase in ridership since 2007. More than 11% of rural transit vehicles (buses, cutaways, minivans and vans) are operating beyond their useful life. CTAA estimates, using the National Transit Database, that there are more than 3,000 buses in use today by rural transit agencies that are significantly beyond their useful life benchmarks. Rural communities face the steepest challenges in securing local matching funds required to leverage federal investment due to limited local economies and inability to generate dedicated revenue through taxing or bonds.

Similarly, aging transit facilities and equipment need immediate repair and replacement. According to a Department of Transportation report, there is a \$90 billion backlog of transit assets across the country – a backlog that is projected to grow to \$122 billion over the next 20 years. Due to the gap between requested and available funds in the BBF program, few transit facilities were awarded competitive grants in recent years as immediate bus replacement needs were prioritized. The BBF Program is a critical source of funding to help address these costly bus replacement, facility and equipment projects. The new budget agreement represents a unique opportunity to start addressing the transit backlog.

Each year, our buses and facilities help transport millions of riders to work, doctor visits, school and recreational activities. To ensure these services operate efficiently and effectively, TBC and CTAA strongly support additional investment in the BBF Program, which helps our transit agencies strive to meet a state of good repair.

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to reach out to TBC's DC contact, Joel Rubin, at joel.rubin@buscoalition.com or 202.347.9171 or CTAA's Scott Bogren at bogren@ctaa.org or 202.247.1921. Thank you for your consideration and support.

Sincerely,



Richard DeRock, President
The Bus Coalition



Scott Bogren, Executive Director
Community Transportation Association of America

Cc: Senate Banking Committee
House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee