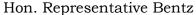
Earth Day 2021



Hon. Representative Blumenauer

Hon. Representative Bonamici

Hon. Representative DeFazio

Hon. Representative Schrader

Hon. Senator Merkley

Hon. Senator Wyden



Re: Support for Congress to Invest in Public Transit

Honorable Members of Oregon's Congressional Delegation:

ROGUE ACTION CENTER Thanks to action by the U.S. Congress over the past year, public transit systems have survived the greatest threat they have ever faced. The COVID -19 pandemic and resulting economic crisis across the country put public transit in existential threat. Thanks to the CARES Act and further emergency relief in 2020, and the American Rescue Plan that passed this spring, public transit has bypassed disaster. So far, we have avoided catastrophic layoffs, service reduction, and closures.



Huge thanks go to Rep. DeFazio and others from the Oregon Delegation for your work and support of positive reforms in the INVEST in America Act infrastructure bill to invest in transit and rebuild America. But public transit can't just return to pre-COVID conditions. The pandemic dramatically showed that transit is essential to our communities, local economies and the lives of millions of people across the country. Essential workers depend on transit, small businesses depend on transit, people with disabilities depend on accessible transit, historically marginalized communities depend on transit.



President Joe Biden has called for the country to build back better. We can't build back better without robust investment in public transit infrastructure and operations. Biden's plan says, "This is no time to just build back to the way things were before, with the old economy's structural weaknesses and inequalities still in place. This is the moment to imagine and build a new American economy for our families and the next generation." Public transit is the foundation of our communities and the economy. It must also be the scaffolding for the new economy we create.



Transit is an economic engine. Tens of millions of people in the U.S. rely on public transit to get to work every day, generating trillions of dollars in economic activity. Every dollar invested in transit offers a five-to-one return and every \$1 billion invested produces 49,700 jobs. Transit agencies are often among the largest employers in their cities.





















Transit is a vehicle for racial equity. Investing in public transit is an investment in racial justice because it is essential to the economic wellbeing of communities of color. Sixty percent of transit riders are people of color. Yet, over the past several decades, the federal investment in transportation has consistently neglected public transit. The systemic racism of mass transit disinvestment needs to stop.

Transit cools the planet. Reinventing the future of public transit infrastructure is also key to tackling climate change. Over 28 percent of greenhouse gases in the U.S. come from transportation — in Oregon it is more than 40 percent — making transportation the largest contributor of U.S. greenhouse gas emissions. Now is the time to invest in the public transit infrastructure for the future.

For all these reasons, we urge you to pass a Surface Transportation Reauthorization that puts our transportation priorities in balance. We call on Congress to increase funding for transit to the same level as highways, and to make necessary investments so that all Americans have access to high quality, safe, affordable, and reliable public transit service and transit-friendly communities.

These new investments would include:

• Create a new operating support program: Modernize transit operations funding to secure frequent and affordable service: Provide \$20 billion in annual funding for operations to ensure the majority of Americans are within walking distance of frequent transit by 2030. Transit agencies should prioritize service in transit dependent neighborhoods to meet the needs of essential workers, communities of color, and low income communities. This could also include support for transit agencies or local communities that wish to provide free or reduced fares. Operating support should be a federal match to local sources of revenue and connected to ridership and incentivize better networks with more frequent service.

• Sufficient capital funding that will:

- Provide enough funding to meet the demand for new and expanded service: Congress should establish a \$12 billion annual capital investments program, with \$6 billion allocated by formula and \$6 billion allocated through discretionary grants for capital projects that improve access to frequent transit for low income people. The existing capital expansion program Capital Investment Grants (CIG) is over-subscribed, providing about \$2 billion annually despite the \$23 billion worth of projects in the pipeline. This new capital expansion program will begin to meet the demand for new and expanded transit.
- Reduce deferred maintenance and the national repair backlog: Provide \$18 billion for maintenance annually with a goal of eliminating the backlog in 12 years.

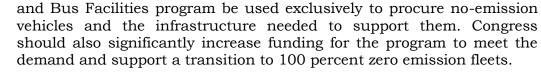












• Building safe streets and transit-friendly communities: Every transit trip begins and ends as a pedestrian or cyclist, yet pedestrian and cyclist fatalities are increasing, particularly for low income and people of color, because our community roads are dangerous by design. Safe streets support investments in public transit, improve equity, and help respond to the climate crisis. Congress should reform federal highway programs to require roads to be designed with safety as a priority, including for vulnerable road users. In addition, Congress \$7 billion to fund equitable Transit-Oriented should provide Development (eTOD) to fund and integrate preservation of affordable housing, increasing affordable housing near transit, and access to active transportation.

• Funding Zero-Emission fleets: Congress should require that the Bus

- Accessible public transit, including paratransit, which is an essential life line for people with disabilities, and each step in building back better must be ADA compliant.
- Transit workers are essential, treat them as essential. Transit workers of all kinds should receive prevailing wages and receive hazard pay when appropriate. Diversity, equity and inclusion should be prioritized in hiring and promotion.

We look forward to working with you as you shape transportation reauthorization legislation.









Sincerely,

Representative Susan McLain Oregon State Legislature

Chair Kathryn Harrington Washington County Board of Commissioners

Juan Carlos Gonzalez Metro Council, District 4

Commissioner Jo Ann Hardesty City of Portland

Council President Eddy Morales City of Gresham

Milwaukie City Council City of Milwaukie Brett Morgan 1000 Friends of Oregon

Patricia Hine 350 Eugene

Bob Krebs Association of Oregon Rail and Transit Advocates (AORTA)

Rob Zako Better Eugene-Springfield Transportation (BEST)

Richard Sheperd Bike Loud PDX

Ashley Henry Business for a Better Portland















Tomoko Sekiguchi Climate Revolutions by Bike

Victoria Paykar Climate Solutions

Jenny Lee

Coalition of Communities of Color

Momoko Saunders Community Cycling Center

Brian Potwin Commute Options

Getting There Together Coalition

Brett Rowlett

Lane Community College

Aimee Okotie-Oyekan NAACP Eugene/Springfield

Rebecca Descombes NAYA Family Center

Isabela Villarreal Next Up Action Fund

Aaron Brown No More Freeways

Amelia Schlusser Oregon Energy Institute at Lewis & Clark Law School

Lee Helfend OPAL Environmental Justice Oregon

Sara Wright Oregon Environmental Council Oregon Trails Coalition

Ashton Simpson Oregon Walks

Stephanie Noll

Ty Wilkins

Participatory Budgeting Oregon

Jessie Maran

Portland Bus Lane Project

James Ofsink Portland Forward

Marsha Hanchrow PSOB Bike Committee

Michelle Glass

Rogue Action Center

Kari Schlosshauer Safe Routes Partnership

Michael Andersen Sightline Institute

Micah Bishop SunrisePDX

Sarah Iannarone The Street Trust

Sushma Raghavan Unite Oregon

Vivian Satterfield Verde

Tyler Mac Innis

Welcome Home Coalition