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National Association of  
City Transportation Officials

[www.nacto.org](http://www.nacto.org)

July 31, 2020

**Corinne Kisner**  
Executive Director

EXECUTIVE BOARD

**Robin Hutcheson**  
President  
Director of Public Works,  
City of Minneapolis

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Majority Leader, United States  
Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Charles Schumer  
Minority Leader, United States  
Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

**Eulois Cleckley**  
Vice President  
Executive Director,  
Department of Transportation and  
Infrastructure, City of Denver

Dear Leader McConnell and Leader Schumer:

**Michael Carroll**  
Secretary  
Deputy Managing Director,  
Office of Transportation and  
Infrastructure Systems, City of  
Philadelphia

The ongoing coronavirus pandemic has plunged the nation's transit agencies into a profound crisis. Dramatic revenue losses have agencies facing multi-billion dollar deficits and significant service cuts; over 100 transit workers have died of Covid-19 as cities work to keep these essential systems running.<sup>1</sup> Funding from the CARES Act in early April mitigated transit providers' initial financial losses but as coronavirus cases continue to surge and restrictions are reinstated across the country, transit is more imperiled than ever. In particular, larger transit agencies, who move a disproportionately large number of riders, did not receive proportionally sufficient funds to guarantee continued operations through the fall.

**Robert Spillar**  
Treasurer  
Director of Transportation, City of  
Austin

**Joseph Barr**  
Affiliate Member Representative  
Director of Traffic, Parking, and  
Transportation, City of Cambridge

While local governments face many pressing needs at this moment, efficient, frequent transit is the backbone of cities' transportation systems and the economies they support. As an association of city transportation departments responsible for a full suite of essential services, from street design and maintenance to the management of public spaces, **we urge Congress to provide financial support for our transit agency partners through FY20 and FY21, with at least \$32 billion in additional emergency aid.**

**Janette Sadik-Khan**  
Chair  
Principal, Bloomberg Associates

As Congress considers a critical federal aid package to address this pandemic's public health and economic consequences, we urge you to consider the following in support of additional resources for transit:

- 1. Transit is an essential service.** While emergency aid from the CARES Act helped agencies stay afloat in the immediate aftermath of the crisis, they are facing long-term deficits as the quick recovery anticipated earlier in the year did not materialize. The outlook for the country's largest transit agencies is especially dire and they may run out of emergency funds as soon as Labor Day.<sup>2</sup> In light of financial difficulties, transit agencies have already had to make long-term service changes, cutting 20 to 30 percent of routes in many cities.

These service cuts have dire impacts. 2.8 million essential workers rely on transit every day, and many lack other options to reach their workplaces.<sup>3</sup> In addition, transit workers are frontline workers themselves, risking their lives to keep service operating. The cost of new cleaning and maintenance protocols, as well as providing PPE to protect workers and riders, adds expenses for transit agencies at a time when revenues from fares and local sales taxes have dropped dramatically. Congress must guarantee additional financial support for transit agencies, particularly the ones serving our largest urban centers, to run frequent service and protect frontline staff for the duration of this crisis.

- 2. The transit industry is a major job creator.** In addition to unlocking movement in cities, investment in transit opens opportunities for American workers. The transit industry is a major job creator locally and nationwide, with every dollar invested in transit offering a five-to-one return and every \$1 billion invested producing 49,700 jobs.<sup>4</sup> Without adequate resources to sustain service, transit agencies will be forced to lay off operators, permanently cut routes, reduce frequency, and suspend plans to expand their systems. At least 30,000 manufacturing and 30,000 construction jobs will be lost without further funding due to the cancellation of transit capital projects.<sup>5, 6</sup> Additional emergency aid for transit agencies now will ensure they are in a position to resume frequent, high-quality service and expand their systems in the aftermath of the pandemic.
- 3. Economic recovery depends on transit.** Investment in transit service is critical to enabling fast and reliable movement without congestion, both during pandemic response and recovery. New York City's transit system alone currently sees daily ridership numbers triple that of all domestic airlines combined.<sup>7, 8</sup> Even a small increase in traffic can result in gridlock in cities, choking their recovery. As cities and states began to reopen in June and July with reduced transit service, vehicle traffic came roaring back -- by the week of July 10th, 31 of 50 states had already returned to or surpassed their pre-Covid vehicle traffic baselines.<sup>9</sup> The total cost of congestion, including productivity, fuel waste, freight impacts and other factors, is over \$88 billion per year and roadways were already at or above capacity well before the pandemic hit.<sup>10, 11</sup> The collapse of transit service will lead to skyrocketing traffic congestion that will further devastate our economy; our cities, and our country cannot afford this.
- 4. Transit is a lifeline to the communities hardest hit by Covid-19.** People of color make up 60 percent of transit riders in the U.S., many of whom do not own a personal vehicle.<sup>12</sup> The pandemic has already had an outsized impact on communities of color -- Black people are dying of Covid-19 at over twice the rate of white people, and Indigenous and Latinx people are 33 percent more likely to die of the virus than white people.<sup>13</sup> Given that people of color make up nearly 40 percent of the essential workforce,<sup>14</sup> further declines in the quality and availability of transit will doubly harm populations most impacted by the pandemic. Sustaining support for transit for the duration of this pandemic is critical for a just recovery.

In order to emerge from this crisis stronger than we entered it, support for transit must be at the heart of any recovery effort. Transit is essential for daily life in cities of all sizes and local governments will feel the financial impacts of the pandemic long-term. As city transportation officials, we are uniquely aware that our cities cannot function without transit. Congress must guarantee at least \$32 billion in additional financial support for our transit agency partners to run

frequent service and protect frontline staff for the duration of this crisis, while preparing agencies to resume regular service afterward, as we work to rebuild local economies.

Sincerely,

Dennis M. Leach  
Director of Transportation  
Arlington Division of Transportation,  
Dept of Environmental Services

Doug Nagy  
Deputy Commissioner  
City of Atlanta Department of Transportation

Robert Spillar  
Director  
Transportation Department, City of Austin

Gregory Rooney  
Acting Commissioner  
Boston Transportation Department

Natalie Stiffler  
Deputy Director of Transportation  
and Mobility  
City of Boulder

Joseph E. Barr  
Director of Traffic, Parking, and  
Transportation  
City of Cambridge

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Department of Traffic and Transportation,  
City of Charleston

Liz Babson  
Director, Charlotte Department of  
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Blythe Bailey  
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Gia Biagi  
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City of Madison

Robin Hutcheson  
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City of Minneapolis

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Jeff Marootian  
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Uyen Dang  
City Traffic Engineer  
City of West Palm Beach

Cc: Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy

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<sup>1</sup> [atu.org/media/releases/as-states-reopen-transit-worker-death-toll-reaches-grim-benchmark](https://www.atu.org/media/releases/as-states-reopen-transit-worker-death-toll-reaches-grim-benchmark)

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- <sup>2</sup> [transitcenter.org/the-cares-act-came-up-short-now-transit-agencies-are-running-out-of-time/](https://transitcenter.org/the-cares-act-came-up-short-now-transit-agencies-are-running-out-of-time/)
- <sup>3</sup> [transitcenter.org/2-8-million-u-s-essential-workers-ride-transit-to-their-jobs/](https://transitcenter.org/2-8-million-u-s-essential-workers-ride-transit-to-their-jobs/)
- <sup>4</sup> [apta.com/research-technical-resources/research-reports/economic-impact-of-public-transportation-investment/](https://apta.com/research-technical-resources/research-reports/economic-impact-of-public-transportation-investment/)
- <sup>5</sup> [masstransitmag.com/management/article/21137432/economic-analysis-puts-pandemic-impact-on-us-transit-industry-at-488-billion](https://masstransitmag.com/management/article/21137432/economic-analysis-puts-pandemic-impact-on-us-transit-industry-at-488-billion)
- <sup>6</sup> [t4america.org/maps-tools/transit-supply-chain/](https://t4america.org/maps-tools/transit-supply-chain/)
- <sup>7</sup> [new.mta.info/coronavirus/ridership](https://new.mta.info/coronavirus/ridership)
- <sup>8</sup> [tsa.gov/coronavirus/passenger-throughput](https://tsa.gov/coronavirus/passenger-throughput)
- <sup>9</sup> [inrix.com/blog/2020/07/inrix-travel-trends-july-4-10/](https://inrix.com/blog/2020/07/inrix-travel-trends-july-4-10/)
- <sup>10</sup> [inrix.com/press-releases/2019-traffic-scorecard-us/](https://inrix.com/press-releases/2019-traffic-scorecard-us/)
- <sup>11</sup> [nationalequityatlas.org/indicators/Car\\_access](https://nationalequityatlas.org/indicators/Car_access)
- <sup>12</sup> [apta.com/wp-content/uploads/Resources/resources/reportsandpublications/Documents/APTA-Who-Rides-Public-Transportation-2017.pdf](https://apta.com/wp-content/uploads/Resources/resources/reportsandpublications/Documents/APTA-Who-Rides-Public-Transportation-2017.pdf)
- <sup>13</sup> [covidtracking.com/race](https://covidtracking.com/race)
- <sup>14</sup> [kff.org/coronavirus-policy-watch/taking-stock-of-essential-workers/](https://kff.org/coronavirus-policy-watch/taking-stock-of-essential-workers/)