

## Statement for the Record

Submitted to:

House of Representatives Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure  
January 14<sup>th</sup>, 2014 Hearing on:

### “Building the Foundation for Surface Transportation Reauthorization”

Chairman Schuster, Ranking Member Rahall, and members of the Committee: We appreciate the opportunity to submit this statement for the record to express our priorities for the surface transportation reauthorization. Our organizations are members of and/or allied with the Transportation Equity Caucus, which is formed by the nation’s leading civil rights, community development, social justice, economic justice, faith-based, health, housing, disability, labor, tribal, women’s groups and transportation organizations. We are focused on driving transportation policies that advance economic and social equity in America.

Transportation is a critical link to opportunity—connecting us to jobs, schools, housing, health care, and grocery stores. We are pleased that the Committee recognizes the importance of providing affordable and accessible transportation choices for all. We look forward to working with the Committee to develop a surface transportation authorization that is driven by that objective.

In addition, our organizations want to bring the following information to your attention:

- ***Millions of American families lack necessary access to reliable, affordable transportation options:***
  - Nearly two-thirds of all residents in small towns and rural communities have few if any transportation options: 41 percent have no access to transit<sup>1</sup>; another 25 percent live in areas with below-average transit services<sup>2</sup>, and many of these areas lack sufficient safe pedestrian facilities.<sup>3</sup>
  - Nearly one in five Americans has a disability<sup>4</sup> and relies on accessible transportation infrastructure (i.e. curb ramps, wheelchair-accessible subways and buses, elevators, etc.), to contribute and remain active participants in their communities.
  - Nearly 20 percent of African-American households, 14 percent of Latino households, and 13 percent of Asian households live without a car.<sup>5</sup> Fifteen percent of Native Americans must travel more than 100 miles to access basic services, such as banks and financial institutions.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> American Public Transportation Association.

<sup>2</sup> *Id.*

<sup>3</sup> Rails to Trails Conservancy, *Active Transportation Beyond Urban Centers*, 2012

<sup>4</sup> US Census Bureau, 2005.

<sup>5</sup> Brookings Institution and UC-Berkeley, *Socioeconomic Differences in Household Automobile Ownership Rates*.

- Three-quarters of low- and middle-skill jobs cannot be accessed by a one-way, 90-minute transit commute.<sup>7</sup>
  - Nearly 19 million working age adults, 9.4 percent of those ages 16–64, have limited proficiency in English, which leaves them unable to communicate effectively with transit operators or read information about public transportation routes.<sup>8</sup>
  - In recent years, more than 80 percent of the nation’s transit systems are proposing to or already have eliminated transit routes, cut service hours, increased fares, or a combination of these.<sup>9</sup>
- ***All Americans are not sharing the economic and social benefits of our transportation investments.***
    - According to the U.S. Department of Treasury, transportation expenses for households in the bottom 90 percent income bracket are twice that of those in the top 10 percent income bracket.
    - While transportation represents a significant sector of our workforce—one in 10 civilian jobs is transportation-related—women, communities of color, low-income people, and people with disabilities are not significant beneficiaries of the jobs and contracting opportunities in the industry.
    - Only 33 percent of working-age people with disabilities are employed, compared to 73 percent of working-age people without disabilities.<sup>10</sup>
    - Of the roughly eight million people employed in the construction of roads, bridges, and transit facilities in 2008, only six percent were African American and 2.5 percent were women, a much smaller proportion than their representation in the overall economy.<sup>11</sup>
    - Latinos often occupy the lowest-wage jobs in the transportation and construction sectors, such as laborers, where 43.1 percent of workers are Latino.<sup>12</sup>
    - Limited sidewalks, crosswalks, and minimal traffic enforcement created safety hazards for pedestrians, and these risks are particularly acute for communities of color. The pedestrian death rate for Hispanics is 62 percent higher than non-Hispanic whites, and the rate for

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<sup>6</sup> U.S. Department of the treasury, Community Development Financial Institutions Fund. *Report of the Native American Lending Study*, 2001. Downloaded from: [http://www.cdfifund.gov/docs/2001\\_nacta\\_lending\\_study.pdf](http://www.cdfifund.gov/docs/2001_nacta_lending_study.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> Brookings Institution, *Missed Opportunity: Transit and Jobs in Metropolitan America*, 2011.

<sup>8</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, *American Community Survey*, Public Use Microdata Sample, 3-Year Estimates 2007-2009.

<sup>9</sup> American Public Transportation Association.

<sup>10</sup> US Census Bureau, 2012 American Community Survey

<sup>11</sup> Bureau of Labor Statistics 2008.

<sup>12</sup> U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Current Population Survey*, 2010 Annual Averages, <ftp://ftp.bls.gov/pub/special.requests/lf/aat18.txt> (accessed March 30, 2011).

African Americans is 73 percent higher than non-Hispanic whites.<sup>13</sup>

It does not have to be this way. Strategic federal investments in transportation can transform struggling communities, unleash untapped human potential, and promote local economic development to allow all people to thrive. To that end, we encourage the Committee to consider the following policy ideas for the next surface transportation authorization:

- 1) ***Preserve and expand existing programs that fund essential transportation options.*** Investments in bicycling, pedestrian, and public transportation infrastructure promote economic prosperity and expand opportunity. These investments are also a lifeline for people who depend on these options, including people with disabilities, older adults, people in rural areas, and low-income households. The recently reformed New Starts and Small Starts programs, which leverage federal transit investments to spur new private sector activity (i.e., commercial revitalization, housing and community development), hold great promise for fostering economic and social inclusion. Strategic investments in sidewalks and bicycle facilities, particularly in low-income communities and communities of color, hold promise for providing much-needed travel options within a neighborhood, as well as “last-mile” connections to local or regional buses and trains.<sup>14</sup> These investments also provide greater opportunity for people to be physically active. In addition, transit operating assistance allows transit providers to maintain service in these fiscally-challenging times, ensuring that Americans can affordably travel to key destinations each day. Moreover, these investments are good for the economy. For example, each \$1 invested in public transportation, yields \$4 in economic return.<sup>15</sup>
- 2) ***Leverage data collection and performance measures to ensure transportation projects benefit all.*** MAP-21 set a framework for states and regions to collect data and establish performance measures that would align federal funding to specific outcomes. Moving forward, it is critical that the next authorization focus on outcomes such as: enhanced mobility for people and goods; reduced household transportation and housing costs; access to jobs for those without vehicles; and improved health and safety for bicyclists and pedestrians. Such an approach holds promise for erasing barriers to economic inclusion for low-income people, communities of color and people with disabilities. Also, performance measures should be developed through a meaningful community engagement process in order to foster greater accountability and transparency. Moreover, the authorization should encourage continued collaboration between the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) and other federal agencies in order to ensure that transportation investments advance performance measures related to local/regional economic development, affordable housing, and access to quality schools and employment.
- 3) ***Expand access to transportation jobs for lower-income people, women, people with disabilities, and communities of color.*** According to a 2013 poll by the Rockefeller Foundation,<sup>16</sup> more than 7 in 10 Americans support a policy agenda designed to reduce racial and ethnic inequality

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<sup>13</sup> Transportation for America. *Dangerous by Design*, 2011.

<sup>14</sup> According to the report *Active Transportations for America*, issued by Rails to Trails Conservancy in 2008, one quarter of trips in America are within a 20-minute walk and half are within a 20-minute bicycle ride.

<sup>15</sup> American Public Transportation Association.

<sup>16</sup> Rockefeller Foundation, PolicyLink and The Center for American Progress, *Building an All-In Nation: A View from the American Public*, 2013. Downloaded from: <http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/race/report/2013/10/22/77665/building-an-all-in-nation/>

through investments in areas like education, job training, and infrastructure improvement. The surface transportation authorization can create the conditions for everyone to participate in the economy. Establishing a construction careers workforce development program<sup>17</sup> at USDOT would help disadvantaged workers have better access to construction employment in the transportation sector, and increase the workforce available to efficiently complete transportation projects. In addition, allowing states to implement local hiring provisions on transportation projects, similar to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, would bring greater benefits to communities where transportation projects are planned or underway.

Our organizations recognize that identifying an approach to funding our transportation needs over the long term is a critical component of advancing surface transportation legislation. We ask you to ensure that any mechanisms used to finance our nation's transportation system do not disproportionately burden low-income people. Further, regardless of the overall level of funding, we urge this Committee to prioritize transportation investments that expand and improve mobility and access for underserved communities.

We urge the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure to advance a robust transportation bill that helps to move us toward the aforementioned vision, and to this end, we stand ready to work with you.

This testimony is endorsed by the following organizations:

1. Alliance for Biking & Walking
2. Amalgamated Transit Union, AFL-CIO
3. America Walks
4. American Public Health Association
5. Americans for Transit
6. Association of Pedestrian and Bicycle Professionals (APBP)
7. Association of Programs for Rural Independent Living (APRIL)
8. Campaign for Community Change
9. Center for Law and Social Policy
10. Center for Social Inclusion
11. Center for the Study of Social Policy
12. Central Florida Jobs with Justice
13. Green for All
14. Independent Living Center of the Hudson Valley Inc.
15. Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity
16. League of American Bicyclists
17. Legal Momentum
18. Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC)
19. Low Income Investment Fund
20. Madison Area Bus Advocates
21. Memphis Bus Riders Union

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<sup>17</sup> A construction careers proposal was introduced by Representative Steve Cohen (D-TN) at the markup of the American Energy and Infrastructure Act of 2012 (H.R. 7).

22. Mid-South Peace and Justice Center
23. NAACP
24. National Alliance of Community Economic Development Associations
25. National Association of County and City Health Officials
26. National Association of Social Workers
27. National Community Land Trust Network
28. National Congress of American Indians
29. National Council of La Raza
30. National Disability Rights Network
31. National Fair Housing Alliance
32. National Housing Conference
33. National Housing Trust
34. National Urban League
35. National Women's Law Center
36. New York Association on Independent Living
37. Partnership for Southern Equity
38. PolicyLink
39. Poverty & Race Research Action Council
40. Public Advocates
41. Rails-to-Trails Conservancy
42. Safe Routes to School National Partnership
43. Sierra Club
44. The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights
45. The National Council on Independent Living
46. The Partnership for Working Families
47. Trust for America's Health
48. United Spinal Association
49. Urban Habitat
50. WE ACT for Environmental Justice
51. Wider Opportunities for Women

For more information, please contact the co-chairs of the Transportation Equity Caucus: Anita Hairston, PolicyLink, 202.906.8034, [anita@policylink.org](mailto:anita@policylink.org) or Lexer Quamie, The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, 202-466-3648, [quamie@civilrights.org](mailto:quamie@civilrights.org).