



June 3, 2009

Senator Daniel Inouye
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
Room S-131, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20510

Senator Thad Cochran
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
Room S-146A, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20510

Representative David Obey
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
Room H-218, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

Representative Jerry Lewis
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
1016 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Inouye, Chairman Obey, Ranking Member Cochran and Ranking Member Lewis:

During conference negotiations on the FY 2009 Supplemental Appropriations Act, I urge you to accept the Senate provision which offers additional flexibility to transit agencies in the use of up to 10 percent of the formula grants provided in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). This modest provision will provide immediate, short-term relief for transit systems struggling to make payroll and maintain service without contributing to the federal budget deficit or further reducing the highway trust fund.

Today, transit ridership is more popular than at any time in the last five decades. Gas price volatility and the economic crisis have lead many commuters to seek out transportation alternatives, including transit. Despite this surge in ridership, mass transit agencies across the country are being forced to lay off workers, increase fares and/or cut service. Among the systems with financial problems are: Anchorage, Ann Arbor, Atlanta, Bloomington, Boston, Buffalo, Charlotte, Chicago, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Colorado Springs, Dallas, Denver, Hampton Roads, Houston, Kansas City, Las Vegas, Los Angeles, Louisville, Madison, Miami, Nashville, New York, Orange County, Phoenix, Providence, Reno, Sacramento, San Diego, San Francisco, Seattle, St. Louis, Syracuse, Topeka, the Twin Cities, and Washington, D.C. Not only would the cuts to transit systems have a direct, negative impact on transit employees, but they will make it more difficult for workers who rely on transit to get to their jobs. In an economy where jobs are already scarce, this is a recipe for further hardship.

Transportation Trades Department, AFL-CIO

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Edward Wytkind, President • Patricia Friend, Secretary-Treasurer

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The ARRA did provide urgently needed capital funds for new buses and other transit expenditures. However, it failed to offer any type of assistance to cover operating expenses. Given the drastic transit cuts around the country, the cause of which can be traced to dramatic decreases in state and local tax revenues, the Senate included a provision in its version of the supplemental appropriations bill to grant transit agencies the flexibility to use some stimulus funds for operating cost shortfalls. This provision would not provide any additional funding to transit agencies, but would simply give them another tool to get through these difficult times.

We urge you to accept the Senate provision and provide transit agencies the funding they need to sustain service and preserve jobs. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions about this issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Edward Wytkind", with a large, stylized flourish at the end.

Edward Wytkind
President

cc: House and Senate Conferees