



Transportation Trades Department, AFL-CIO

February 23, 2024

The Honorable Mike Johnson
Speaker of the House
H-232, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Senate Majority Leader
S-221, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Kay Granger
House Appropriations Committee
H-307, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Patty Murray
Senate Appropriations Committee
S-128, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510-6025

Dear Speaker Johnson, Leader Schumer, Chair Granger, and Chair Murray:

With only seven days left until Transportation, Housing, and Urban Development (THUD) appropriations run out on March 1, and a week more before the remainder of the continuing appropriations expire, we urge Congress to work quickly to prevent a government shutdown and provide adequate funding for FY 2024 transportation programs and other programs important to transportation workers under the bipartisan topline funding compromise reached early this year.

Government shutdowns wreak havoc on our transportation system, force federal workers and contractors to stay at home or work without pay, and cost our economy billions of dollars that we will never get back. Furthermore, constantly teetering on the brink of a shutdown destroys our country's reputation around the world and dangerously strains the people's trust in government. Congress must not take a cavalier approach to this impending deadline. We urge you to provide our transportation systems with the funding necessary to deliver reliable service, grow our economy, and improve the lives of working people across the country. Congress must not allow any further delays that would force more funding cuts.

As you finalize Fiscal Year 2024 appropriations, we urge you to consider the following priorities. We also urge you to come to an agreement on funding bills that are free of poison-pill policy riders and benefit-slashing fiscal commissions. The task at hand is far too important to risk by embedding deeply controversial provisions.

Transportation, Housing and Urban Development (THUD)

Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) - TTD is deeply concerned by the staggering cuts the House proposed to Amtrak's National Network and Northeast Corridor accounts. The House's previously proposed overall funding level for Amtrak would be the lowest annual funding that Amtrak has received since FY2003, and would devastate Amtrak's existing operations, jeopardize over 10,000 jobs, and lead to widespread service cuts on Amtrak's National Network. The annual grant that Amtrak receives from the federal government is vital to Amtrak's day-to-day operations as funds from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law can only be used for capital projects, and not operations. **TTD supports**

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funding Amtrak at the Senate Appropriations THUD Subcommittee Bill level of \$1.313 billion for National Network Grants and \$1.141 billion for Northeast Corridor Grants. The Federal-State Partnership for Intercity Passenger Rail is also deeply important to TTD, as it provides important funding for rail capital projects that reduce the state of good repair backlog, improve performance, or expand or establish new intercity passenger rail service, including privately operated intercity passenger rail service. **TTD supports funding the Federal-State Partnership for Intercity Passenger Rail Program at the Senate Appropriations THUD Subcommittee Bill level of \$100 million. We also commend Congress's commitment to rail safety and endorse providing additional funds to FRA to hire additional rail safety inspectors and research important rail safety issues.**

TTD also strongly supports the California High Speed Rail Project, which will deliver a modern, efficient, and green transit system while putting more than ten thousand skilled union members to work. **TTD vehemently opposes any provision that prohibits federal funds from being used for a high-speed rail corridor development project in California.**

Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) - Securing robust funding for the FAA remains critical to ensure the safety and efficiency of the National Airspace System and, therefore, the safety of hundreds of thousands of aviation workers we represent. **TTD supports funding the FAA Operations account at \$12.741 billion,** which would allow the FAA to hire 1,800 new critically-needed air traffic controllers, improve aircraft certification, improve important IT and communications systems, and improve the Technical Operations workforce. The current air traffic controllers (ATCs) shortage has forced the FAA to implement mandatory overtime for thousands of ATCs, including 10 hour days and six-day work weeks. This cannot continue. **TTD also strongly supports \$3.429 billion for the FAA Facilities and Equipment account,** which pays for modernizing and upgrading air traffic control facilities, NextGen programs, and other major capital investments.

Federal Transit Administration (FTA) - TTD supports full funding for public transportation and for programs that support workforce training and safety. **We call for expansive funding for Capital Investment Grants, Transit Investment Grants, Buses and Bus Facilities, the Low- and No-Emissions program, and ferry programs.** But we must also acknowledge that in the near- and long-term, the federal public transportation funding programs, which primarily support capital projects, are not a sustainable way to support our public transportation needs. Congress must support efforts like Congressman Hank Johnson's Stronger Communities Through Better Transit Act to allow federal transit funds to support the operating needs of public transportation systems across the country.

Infrastructure Grants - **TTD supports robust funding for the RAISE Grant program.** While major infrastructure grants have always enabled our nation to take great strides in modernizing and expanding our transportation infrastructure, in recent years, RAISE grants have also meaningfully expanded opportunities for working people and the communities they serve by prioritizing applicants that guarantee workers have the free and fair choice to join a union, and encourage the utilization of registered apprenticeship and local hire agreements. **TTD also supports robust funding for federal aid to highways and Highway Infrastructure Programs.**

Maritime Administration - Over the last year, several military conflicts abroad have put a spotlight on the importance of the Maritime Security Program (MSP) and the Tanker Security Program (TSP). MSP is an essential component of our military sealift capability because it guarantees that trained U.S. citizen mariners will be available in times of crisis or disaster by providing a stipend to commercial shipping companies to enable them to continue sailing U.S.-flag vessels, at a fraction of the cost it

would take the federal government to replicate similar maritime shipping capacity. TSP provides a stipend for a fleet of tanker vessels in exchange for the commitment that these vessels will be available to the Department of Defense during a conflict or national emergency. This capacity is indispensable to both our security and humanitarian efforts. **Given the great need that this time of crisis presents, TTD strongly urges Congress to fund the Maritime Security Program at the fully authorized level of \$318 million and the Tanker Security Program at \$120 million, including funds for a mariner training program.**

TTD also supports a \$213 million appropriation for the Port Infrastructure Development Program. This funding is absolutely imperative in meeting our nation's freight transportation needs.

Labor, Health and Human Services (LHHS)

National Mediation Board (NMB) - The NMB plays an essential role in the facilitation of labor-management relations in the aviation and rail industries, which not only holds massive sway in the lives and working conditions of hundreds of thousands of airline and rail workers, but also handles disputes that have the potential to massively impact our economy. **TTD supports the \$15,113,000 provided in both the House-proposed and Senate-proposed FY2024 LHHS bills put forward last year.**

Railroad Retirement Board (RRB) - TTD is deeply concerned about administrative funding for the RRB. RRB is in dire need of more employees and has consistently asked Congress to increase the administrative funding limitation to better meet the needs of the over 530,000 beneficiaries currently served by RRB. Already contending with long processing times and having to put off various projects that would provide greater administrative efficiency, flat funding would mean that RRB is further limited in Field Service hiring, processing times for applications would increase, and the agency will likely need to suspend critical workloads. With many career RRB employees near retirement and after years of difficulty hiring due to low budgets, the RRB faces a slow moving crisis that will take years of favorable budgets to recover and fully train the workforce needed to provide services at proficiency standards. **For this reason, TTD supports funding the Railroad Retirement Board at the President's proposed amount of \$138.575 million.** This funding level will prevent the reduction in service that flat funding would force, and will enable the agency to expand on its number one priority: hiring and retention. By significantly reducing attrition, the agency can fulfill its mission and provide timely services and resources to railroad workers. Funding at the \$138.575 million level would also allow RRB to complete various IT modernization and other administrative projects that would create administrative efficiencies, allowing the agency to do more with less for years to come.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Greg Regan
President