



June 23, 2025

Dear Representative:

On behalf of the vast majority of transit workers across the U.S. and the millions of your constituents back home that they help move every single day, we write asking for your support by cosponsoring the *Stronger Communities Through Better Transit Act* (H.R. 3449), introduced by Congressman Hank Johnson. This bipartisan bill, which comes at a critical financial crossroads for public transportation service across the country, would establish federal operating support for public transportation, allowing transit agencies to improve service in communities large and small.

Nearly all public transit rides are on systems prohibited from using federal funds on operating costs. Federal support is generally limited to capital costs including rolling stock procurements, facilities, and other capital improvements. While the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act provided a historic and long overdue 45% increase in transit funding, many transit agencies are facing large budget deficits because none of these new funds are allowed to be used on fuel, wages, service frequency, or other operating expenses which account for 68% of transit costs nationally.

Operating expenses have the most direct and immediate effect in our communities. Frequency of service, job quality, safety, and other important services are entirely dependent on the operations account and simply cannot be improved without a stable operating fund. Worse, without healthy levels of funding for operating costs, transit agencies across the country run the serious risk of causing a so-called “transit death spiral”: transit agencies cut service or increase fares and in turn fewer people use public transport, leading to even greater declines in revenue. The consequences of this would be devastating to riders, to local economies, and to the well-being of the workers we represent.

These financial pressures are exacerbated by the fact that current federal law incentivizes states and localities to chase matching funds for capital investments. While utilizing the historic increases in federal transit funding is certainly an important goal, some municipalities are choosing to generate local matching dollars by moving funding out of the operations account, a process that only accelerates insolvency. This is a nonsensical approach, but one that is ultimately encouraged by the current limitations on federal funding. Under today's structure, the potential benefit of public transportation is severely limited.

H.R. 3449 corrects decades of flawed public policy by creating a new program to support transit operations. Importantly, these funds would be made available in addition to the existing capital program, ensuring that agencies can continue to upgrade or maintain their systems in a state-of-good-repair while allowing them to provide better, more frequent transit service and create high-quality jobs. This legislation is essential for the long-term well-being of our public transportation systems and we hope you will join us in supporting H.R. 3449. For any questions or to join as a cosponsor, please contact Renaldine Lafleche in Congressman Hank Johnson's office at Renaldine.lafleche@mail.house.gov.

Sincerely,

American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME)
Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU)
International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers (IAM)
International Brotherhood of Teamsters (IBT)
Transportation Communications Union (TCU)
Transport Workers Union of America (TWU)
Transportation Trades Department, AFL-CIO (TTD)