

California Department of Transportation

OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR
P.O. BOX 942873, MS-49 | SACRAMENTO, CA 94273-0001
(916) 654-6130 | FAX (916) 653-5776 TTY 711
www.dot.ca.gov



July XX, 2021

Dear California Congressional Delegation Member:

California is the world's fifth-largest economy. Measured by value, more international goods enter California than any other state, moving through its 12 seaports, 12 major cargo-handling airports, and 3 land ports of entry with Mexico. In addition, the State's agricultural sector is a critical source of goods for export and is the largest producer of food in the United States. At the same time, the State of California has led the nation, making significant investments in our infrastructure.

California's Senate Bill (SB) 1, *the Road Repair and Accountability Act of 2017*, invests \$54 billion over ten years to fix roads, freeways and bridges in communities across California and puts more dollars toward transit and safety. Moreover, in California, 25 county transportation agencies formed the Self-Help Counties Coalition (SHCC) that will fund approximately \$194 billion of voter-approved transportation investments by mid-century, injecting billions each year into essential transportation programs and projects throughout California.

With SB 1 and the SHCC, the state and local agencies are doing their part to fund and deliver important transportation projects that are vital to the quality of life and economic strength of California, and we call for increased federal investment in infrastructure – in partnership with our ongoing investments – for the benefit of the whole country and to address significant state transportation system needs.

Forward progress to reauthorize the *Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act* (Public Law No. 114-94) is on the horizon, with both chambers of Congress finalizing their respective bills. With less than four months until the current authorization expires, we greatly appreciate the urgency with which Congress is acting on this critical legislation.

Earlier this year, as the federal transportation agenda began to emerge, the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) implemented its plan to convene the California Federal Affairs Working Group (Working Group). This Working Group is comprised of the stakeholders in the State's transportation system, whose members include the State of California, Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs), Regional Transportation Planning Agencies (RTPAs), Tribal Governments, transportation providers, the private sector and labor.

As Congress continues its efforts to reauthorize surface transportation programs, the Working Group recommends five priority areas for inclusion as this important legislation moves forward. These priority areas are:

1. Transportation Resilience

Each year our national transportation system is stressed by blizzards, searing heat, flooding, wildfire and other severe weather events. Hurricanes have raised awareness of the vulnerability of our coastal communities, and our interior states where serious flooding has devastated our nation's communities. In California, we are facing increasingly frequent and severe floods and wildfires due to climate change. Federal investments are needed to help our State Departments of Transportation and local governments develop climate-resilient infrastructure following extreme weather events, and to mitigate the risk of future reoccurring damages. We urge Congress to ensure funding is provided for resilient transportation projects to endure our changing climate, and increasingly frequent extreme weather and wildfire events.

2. Active Transportation

We urge Congress to include the provisions in the INVEST in America Act that provide increased funding for the Transportation Alternatives Program. This funding is critical to increase safety and mobility for our nation's non-motorized users. In California, safety is always our top priority. However, our numbers have been trending in the wrong direction for some time now. Every year, about 3,600 individuals die on California's transportation system. With an unacceptable number of people dying each day on our roadways in traffic crashes we must shift our efforts to prioritize safe mobility, and federal leadership will be key in this shift to save lives.

Investing in active transportation furthers the State's sustainability and climate preparedness objectives and improves the quality of life and public health of Californians. California has made a major commitment to walking and bicycling through investment in our Active Transportation Program, and we want to continue to increase that investment with additional federal funding. Specifically, California supports tripling the amount of funding authorized for the programs that fund our ATP. Congress should also ensure that active transportation projects continue to be eligible for funding from the Highway Trust Fund.

3. Zero-Emission Bus Grant Program

We request Congress include the provision in the INVEST in America Act that rewards states and transit agencies that have made a commitment to transition to fully zero-emission fleets by granting them access to a funding set-aside for

zero-emission bus grants. This policy would support California's transit agencies in expeditiously transitioning our entire 12,000 bus fleet to zero-emission technologies while also incentivizing transit agencies across the country to take aggressive steps to accelerate zero-emission bus deployment.

4. Financing

We urge Congress to continue its support for our nation's transit agencies as they continue to recover their ridership losses due to Covid-19. Specifically, flexibility is needed to support our smaller operators whose operations and business have been severely disrupted by the response to the pandemic. We also support the provisions in the INVEST in America Act that expand and streamline the financing tools available to transit and rail agencies to augment direct investment in the nation's transportation infrastructure.

5. Transportation Equity

We request collaboration in eliminating disparities while improving outcomes for all users of the transportation network, especially in the areas of safety, multimodality, and accessibility. We also urge Congress to provide funding to enhance, repair and restore multimodal connectivity in communities impacted by the construction of highways and freeways. Additionally, we ask Congress to include the language in the INVEST in America Act that provides new funding to pilot and study reduced and fare free transit.

6. Goods Movement and Gateway Corridor Projects

We urge Congress to prioritize freight funding for Gateway Corridor projects. These projects enhance the nation's economic competitiveness, providing essential connections from the ports including those in California to the nation's largest distribution centers, ensuring vital goods move more reliably through California and the nation.

We appreciate your leadership and urge you to incorporate these priorities into surface transportation authorization legislation. California is ready and willing to partner with the federal government to match increased federal infrastructure investment to help address the expanding needs of our evolving and complex transportation system.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

TOKS OMISHAKIN
Director

c:

DRAFT