

California Department of Transportation

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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, multiple international rail lines, and 3 commercial land ports of entry with Mexico. In addition, the State's agricultural sector is a critical source of goods and the largest producer of food in the United States.

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

State and local agencies in California are doing their part to fund and deliver important transportation projects that are vital to the quality of life and economic strength of California. Our state is calling for increased federal investment in infrastructure—in partnership with ongoing state and local investments—for the benefit of the whole country and to address the state's significant transportation 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 three months until the current authorization expires, we greatly appreciate the urgency with which Congress is acting on this critical legislation. We also applaud the efforts from both chambers of Congress to advance the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act.

Earlier this year, as the federal transportation agenda began to emerge, the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) convened a California Transportation Federal Affairs Working Group (Working Group). This Working Group is comprised of numerous stakeholders in the State's transportation system, including the State of California, Metropolitan Planning Organizations, Regional Transportation Planning Agencies, Tribal Governments, transit providers, private sector entities, and labor organizations.

As Congress continues its efforts to reauthorize surface transportation programs and to negotiate an infrastructure package, the Working Group voices our support for your actions to-date to substantially increase funding for these programs. The Working Group has identified seven priority areas for inclusion as this important legislation moves forward. These priority areas are:

1. Climate Change and 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 flooding, sea level rise, and wildfires due to climate change. Transportation systems need robust federal investment in transit, carbon reduction, resiliency programs, and grant programs that fund sustainable multimodal transportation projects.

We urge Congress to ensure that any final package includes robust funding for the above-mentioned programs to reduce transportation sector emissions and to ensure California can be resilient to the myriad climate threats that our state faces—from rising sea levels to increasingly frequent extreme weather and wildfire events. This funding will significantly help to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, invest in climate-resilient infrastructure that facilitates quick response and recovery efforts, and plan for and mitigate against the risk of future reoccurring damages.

2. Active Transportation

In California, safety is always our top priority and we are working collaboratively at the local, state, and county level to achieve the goals of "Vision Zero." Unfortunately, our numbers have been trending in the wrong direction. 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. 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.

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 (ATP), 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, and supports the "Active Transportation Connectivity" competitive grant program included in the current House and Senate reauthorization bills. Congress should also ensure that active transportation projects continue to be eligible for funding from the Highway Trust Fund.

3. Zero-Emission Bus Investment

California's transit agencies are poised to expeditiously transition our entire fleet of 12,000 buses to zero-emission technologies, and we support policies that incentivize transit agencies across the country to take aggressive steps to accelerate zero-emission bus deployment. Public funding should only be available to manufacturers in the United States, and priority should be given to companies with a unionized workforce and a commitment to provide high quality training programs, apprenticeships, and Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Training Program (EVITP) certification for infrastructure installations.

We request Congress include the Zero-Emission Bus Grant Program 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 setting aside funding for zero-emission buses and infrastructure. Additionally, we encourage Congress to permanently reinstate the Alternative Fuel Tax Credit, extend the credit to include electricity and hydrogen as an eligible alternative transportation fuel, and allow agencies to draw credits for multiple fuel types. These changes would ensure that the Alternative Fuel Tax Credit provides incentives for zero-emission buses equivalent or comparable to the alternative fuels tax credit currently available for compressed and liquefied natural gas.

4. Relief and Financing Tools

We urge Congress to continue its support for our nation's transit agencies as they continue to recover from their ridership losses due to COVID-19. Such relief should include continued short-term flexibility in the use of federal funds for capital and operating purpose. We also encourage Congress to expand and streamline the financing tools available to transportation agencies, including America Fast Forward Transportation Bonds and Transportation Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act, including the Rural Project Initiative, to augment direct investment in the nation's transportation infrastructure. We also support the reinstatement of the tax-exempt status of the advanced refunding of bonds, allowing state and local governments to realize savings on debt service. Finally, we support creating flexibility in the Railroad Rehabilitation and Improvement Financing program to allow for easier utilization by transit agencies.

5. Transportation Equity

We acknowledge that communities of color and under-served communities experienced fewer benefits and a greater share of negative impacts associated with our state's transportation system. Some of these disparities reflect a history of transportation decision-making, policy, processes, planning, design, and construction that literally put up barriers, divided communities, and amplified racial inequities, particularly in our Black and Brown neighborhoods. Thus, we request your collaboration to eliminate barriers by providing more equitable transportation not only for Californians, but for all of the people in our Country. This understanding is the foundation for intentional decision-making that recognizes past, stops current, and prevents future harms from our actions.

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 support the House INVEST In America's proposal to significantly increase funding for the federal transit program and 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, Freight Gateways, and Corridors

The recent COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the challenges our national supply chains face with our aging freight infrastructure. California's air, land, and maritime ports of entry, coupled with our roadway and rail corridors interlinking these gateways, enhance the nation's economic competitiveness by providing essential connections to and from the nation's largest distribution centers and ensuring vital goods move more reliably through California and the nation and a transition to cleaner transportation.

We urge Congress to prioritize sustainable freight funding for our nation's critical freight gateways and corridors, which includes our small urban/rural corridors that serve as critical safety routes to support California's Sustainable Freight Action Plan and the clean air action plans for California's ports. Additionally, we support the removal of caps on non-highway investment in formula funding to states and discretionary programs, and provide flexibility for states to use discretion in determining the amount of formula funding dedicated to multimodal freight projects identified in the state's freight plan.

7. Intercity Passenger Rail

California has been a leader in our support for intercity passenger rail as evidenced by the more than \$4.5 billion in state and local funds committed to intercity rail since just 2015, and is leading the way investing in research and development for zero-emission commuter rail for deployment by 2024. We believe that an expanded and improved rail network will play a critical role in

reducing greenhouse gas emissions from the transportation sector. We are committed to moving toward a zero-emission rail fleet by 2035 and support any federal legislative action to support that objective. We also intend to integrate this rail network with local transit systems across the state to improve mobility of California residents.

We urge Congress to support a substantially expanded intercity passenger rail program and are encouraged by proposals to increase authorization levels for discretionary grant programs. While we have relied almost exclusively on state and local funds to implement projects in recent years, we believe that a strong federal partnership will allow us to accelerate the implementation of our rail vision. As a part of this program, we also encourage Congress to support investments in rail safety, including increased funding for grade crossing improvements and other strategies that will reduce rail related injuries and fatalities.

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,

The following undersigned members of the Working Group:

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