

February 5, 2004

The Honorable Richard Shelby  
Chairman  
Senate Committee on Banking,  
Housing and Urban Affairs  
534 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510-6075

The Honorable Paul S. Sarbanes  
Ranking Minority Member  
Senate Committee on Banking,  
Housing and Urban Affairs  
534 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510-6075

Dear Chairman Shelby and Ranking Minority Member Sarbanes:

On behalf of the Surface Transportation Policy Project and its many partner organizations, we are writing to convey our support for the "Federal Public Transportation Act of 2004", legislation approved February 4 that provides for a six-year, \$56.5 billion program commitment to public transportation as well as other critical transportation policies under your Committee's jurisdiction.

We want to commend you and members of the Committee for renewing the key program elements of current law, ensuring that the recent successes in improving public transportation services under TEA-21 will continue into this next renewal period. Our support for this package, however, is conditioned upon resolving outstanding funding issues with the full Senate regarding funding guarantees and firewalled spending to ensure that the critical feature of TEA-21 that made expanded transit investment and improved services possible is part of the final package. This must ensure that transit providers, other agencies and the public can count on the full \$56.5 billion over the six-year renewal period.

Specifically, we want to applaud your efforts to protect the core elements of the existing program structure, ranging from continuation of the Rail Modernization program to the Jobs Access and Reverse Commute program, while finding resources to support new policy efforts such as those envisioned under the President's *New Freedom Initiative* and Transit in the Parks program. Finally, we also want to convey our support for the Committee's affirmation of current law protections for clean air conformity and other clean air-related provisions as well as preserving other important current law policies governing NEPA and other project delivery elements. It is our firm position that final provisions in the Senate bill must fully account for the need to consider fairly and fully transportation alternatives that minimize or avoid adverse impacts and affirm locally determined priorities. In this way, this renewal legislation will ensure that state and local investment decisions are more balanced, offering more choices to the public and making continuing gains in air quality and other community health and environmental objectives.

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We support your legislation with the aforementioned condition and urge your colleagues to support it fully during Senate action on TEA-21 renewal.

Sincerely,

America Bikes

Association for Commuter Transportation

American Society of Landscape Architects

Chicagoland Bicycle Federation

Environmental and Energy Study Institute

Environmental Defense

National Association of Railroad Passengers

National Parks Conservation Association

National Recreation and Park Association

Natural Resources Defense Council

Sierra Club

Smart Growth America

Surface Transportation Policy Project

Union of Concerned Scientists