

May 22, 2019

Office of Congressman DeFazio
2134 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Office of Congressman Graves
1135 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Office of Congresswoman Norton
2136 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Office of Congressman Davis
1740 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman DeFazio, Congressman Graves, Congresswoman Norton and Congressman Davis:

On behalf of the undersigned organizations and our millions of members and supporters, we write regarding current efforts to reauthorize the Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act of 2015. Given fundamental shifts over the past decade in the places Americans choose to live, their mobility needs and modal preferences, combined with the mounting adverse health and environmental impacts of fossil fuel emissions, we call on you to ensure that the new surface transportation reauthorization pursues a bolder, better vision for our transportation future. A bolder policy will help ensure that federal investment addresses the varying mobility needs of Americans. Significant policy change is essential to respond to new technologies and changing needs.

The current system of allocating funds based on vehicle miles traveled, fuel consumed, and number of highways gives incentive to continue building expensive highways, while disregarding the mobility needs of those who cannot afford or are unable to drive. Federal policy should place a greater focus on addressing neglected maintenance and recognize that new roads increase total maintenance costs. Policies that focus most resources on one mode fail to serve the needs of all Americans.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) reports consistent increases in pedestrian and cyclist fatalities over the past twenty years, and the 2018 numbers of pedestrian and bicyclist fatalities are the highest since 1990. Federal policies have failed to put in place countermeasures to stem this rise and address preventable deaths and injuries.

Recent Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) data regarding greenhouse gas emissions¹ indicates that the transportation sector generates the largest share of greenhouse gas emissions of any source, primarily from burning fossil fuel for cars and trucks. Federal transportation policy must respond to the growing urgency to address climate change.

New technologies present challenges and opportunities. Autonomous, connected, electric and shared vehicles could transform the ways Americans move. New mobility options such as dockless bikeshare and scooters give people efficient new ways to get around, while new approaches like micro-transit blur the line between modes. While these new opportunities hold promise, management of these new mobility options will determine how they impact societal outcomes. Federal policy should ensure that emerging technologies integrate well with existing modes, including transit, and create expectations that they will be managed to further efficient and equitable transportation choices.

¹ EPA. Sources of Greenhouse Gas Emissions. Retrieved May 3, 2019, from <https://www.epa.gov/ghgemissions/sources-greenhouse-gas-emissions>

Congress must act to ensure equitable and balanced mobility options serving all Americans across urban, suburban and rural communities.

A bold and visionary federal transportation program is critical to ensure that Americans can continue to thrive economically and maintain a high standard of living. We ask that Congress pursue a policy that focuses on accessibility, mobility, equity, affordability, climate, health and safety. Specifically, the next federal surface transportation bill should go further in funding multi-modal transportation networks, including reliable transit options and safe, connected trail and active transportation networks and spines. It should assess the effectiveness of these investments by measuring accessibility and connectivity for all modes. It should also incentivize appropriate strategies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and prioritize funding for modes of travel that have a lesser impact on the environment.

We look forward to continuing our discussion about these priorities and working to ensure that these and similar strategies are part of the bill. Please do not hesitate to contact Kevin Mills at 202-974-5121 if you would like to discuss these ideas further.

Sincerely,

Kevin Mills
Vice President of Policy
Rails-to-Trails Conservancy



Beth Osborne
Director of Transportation for America
Transportation for America



Christopher A. Coes
Vice President, Land Use and Development
Smart Growth America



Dennis Markatos-Soriano
Executive Director
East Coast Greenway Alliance



Jenn Dice
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Director of Policy & Partnerships
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