

Congress of the United States  
Washington, DC 20515

**SUPPORT EXPANDING TRANSPORTATION OPTIONS  
FOR OUR SENIORS**

*Co-sign letter advocating for needs of older Americans in  
SAFETEA-LU reauthorization bill*

April 6, 2009

Dear Colleague:

Please join us in sending the following letter regarding senior transportation to Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure Chairman Oberstar and Ranking Member Mica. As we prepare for the reauthorization of the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU), we must ensure an increased investment in transportation resources to support the growing needs of older Americans to allow them to age-in-place and remain active.

If you have any questions about this letter, or if you would like to sign on, please do not hesitate to contact Ben Rich in Rep. Pascrell's office (5-5751), Katy Dawson in Rep. Carnahan's office (5-2671), David Kush in Rep. Smith's office (5-3765), or Jay O'Callaghan in Rep. Ros-Lehtinen's office.

The deadline for signing this letter is Friday, April 24<sup>th</sup>.

Sincerely,



Bill Pascrell, Jr.  
Member of Congress



Russ Carnahan  
Member of Congress



Christopher H. Smith  
Member of Congress



Heana Ros-Lehtinen  
Member of Congress

Members of the **Senior Transportation Task Force** supporting this letter include:

AARP  
AFSCME Retirees Program  
Alliance for Retired Americans  
American Association of Homes and Services  
for the Aging  
American Bus Association  
American Society on Aging  
Association of Jewish Aging Services of North  
America  
Beverly Foundation  
B'nai B'rith International  
Easter Seals  
Families USA  
Meals On Wheels Association of America  
National Association of Area Agencies on Aging  
National Association of Social Workers

National Association of State Long Term Care  
Ombudsman Programs  
National Association of State Units on Aging  
National Caucus and Center on Black Aged, Inc.  
National Complete Streets Coalition  
National Council on Aging  
National Human Services Assembly  
National Indian Council on Aging  
National Senior Citizens Law Center  
National Senior Corps Association  
OWL, The Voice of Midlife and Older Women  
Partners for Livable Communities  
The Association of BellTel Retirees  
The Salvation Army  
United Jewish Communities  
Volunteers of America

Dear Chairman Oberstar and Ranking Member Mica:

As the Committee considers its priorities for the authorization of highway and transit programs, we would like to call your attention to the pressing transportation needs of our nation's older adults.

Since the last authorization there has been a tremendous increase in the need for transportation for older adults and this need is only anticipated to grow more rapidly over the next reauthorization period. While many older adults utilize private transportation, the majority will lose at some point the physical and/or financial capability to drive as they age. Between 2010 and 2030, the number of older adults in the United States is expected to increase another 80 percent. By 2020, there will be nearly 55 million adults age 65 and older, and by 2030, 72 million.

Even now, many older adults find it difficult to access essential transportation services in their communities. This is particularly true for older adults who live in suburban or rural communities where destinations are too far to walk, public transit is non-existent or poor, and private transportation is limited and prohibitively expensive. Older Americans represent the fastest growing demographic in our nation, and their desire to participate in the workforce, age-in-place, and access social and health services is increasing – and their ability to achieve these goals largely depends on their access to transportation services.

Without adequate transportation, this vulnerable population group will either remain isolated in their homes or be forced into unnecessary institutionalization. While the *Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users* (SAFETEA-LU) provided increased funding for senior transportation, significant new funds are needed to address the estimated \$1 billion per year in unmet transportation needs that now exist for older adults—needs that will only increase over the next five years.

The authorization provides an excellent opportunity for Congress to improve the availability and accessibility of transportation services for older Americans. We support the following steps to ensure that older adults have more adequate transportation options:

- **Increase overall transit funding for programs that promote more livable communities and support mobility options for all.** We support increased funding for transit programs in all areas of the country, including formula grants for urbanized and rural areas and others that provide more targeted funding to vulnerable populations. It is critical that the next authorization provide an increased investment in transit at a level that will meet the growing demand for services and allow for affordable, efficient and reliable transportation options for all Americans.
- **Boost funding for federal transportation programs dedicated to serve older adults.** We support significantly higher funding levels for the Federal Transit Administration's Section 5310 Elderly and Persons with Disabilities Program. This vital program will receive \$133.5 million in funding in FY2009 – nowhere near enough to ensure necessary transportation for millions of older adults over age 60, and certainly not enough to accommodate the huge number of baby boomers who have already started to turn 60. The Section 5310 account must be increased to a minimum of \$350 million per year by the final year of the authorization.
- **Expand the use of Section 5310 funds for operating assistance from the current pilot initiative.** Currently, in all but seven states, the Section 5310 funds states receive are limited to capital expenditures; we propose allowing these funds to include assistance with operating costs. This change would greatly assist providers struggling to maintain accessible, senior-friendly vans and buses. It would also make the Section 5310 program consistent with programs including the Section 5307 urbanized program, the Section 5311 rural program, and the Job Access and Reverse Commute (JARC) program.
- **Increase funding for the National Center on Senior Transportation (NCST).** First authorized under SAFETEA-LU, the NCST provides needed technical assistance on best practices for non-governmental organizations and public agencies. Increased funding is needed to award more community seed grants to demonstrate creative and effective solutions to increasing mobility for older adults. We request a funding level of \$5 million per year for the NCST, half of which would be used for capacity building to provide additional technical assistance and share models and best practices and half would be used for demonstration projects supporting innovative community-level senior transportation programs.
- **Provide incentives and support for further coordination of transit and other human services programs by increasing the accountability and transparency of planning processes.** Planning and coordination efforts continue to be hampered by jurisdictional barriers and a lack of cooperation between transit and human services agencies. To address these issues, transit planning must be more effectively integrated into broader community and aging network planning efforts. States and metropolitan planning organizations are encouraged to reach out to the aging and disability communities when making decisions that will impact older adults and persons with disabilities and provide these stakeholders with ample opportunity to participate in the development of transportation improvement programs.
- **Enhance access to mobility management services to better help transit and human services systems meet the needs of older adults.** Currently, only minimal technical assistance is available to help transportation programs develop mobility management strategies and adapt them to elders' unique needs, and there are few incentives for local providers to adopt these strategies. For mobility management to work in the human services transportation arena, there should be an enhanced federal share for any mobility management activities that bring together transportation, Older Americans Act programs and services, senior housing, and other federally sponsored programs for older adults that have service coordinators, case managers, or similar functions that involve mobility management.
- **Offer greater incentives and support to volunteers providing vital services.** Help must be offered to transit and human services programs to retain volunteers to serve older adults and persons with disabilities. This could easily take the form of an increased reimbursement rate for volunteers providing services using their own resources on their own time.

We look forward to working with you closely to ensure that the growing transportation needs of older adults are given the consideration they deserve, and that they receive their fair share of transportation resources. We thank you for your interest in this critical issue.