

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 19, 2012

The Honorable Tom Latham
Chairman
Transportation, Housing & Urban
Development Subcommittee
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable John Olver
Ranking Member
Transportation, Housing & Urban
Development Subcommittee
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Latham and Ranking Member Olver:

We write to express our strong support for the New Starts program administered by the U.S. Department of Transportation's Federal Transit Administration (FTA). We urge you to fully fund this national program with a \$2.235 billion appropriation, matching the level requested by President Obama in his FY 2013 Budget for existing and pending full funding grant agreements as well as other capital investment projects that have been recommended for grants. Included within the other capital investment projects, is funding for two Los Angeles County transportation projects. Both of these projects would serve to both enhance Los Angeles County's existing transit system and strengthen the ridership on over 10 planned transit systems that are slated to be built across Los Angeles County in the decades to come.

The New Starts program moves America forward, providing access and sustaining commerce in our economy. The program, which has existed for over five decades, provides critical funding for new fixed guide way construction - including commuter rail, subway, light rail, ferries and bus rapid transit projects - in our communities. Such infrastructure spending not only creates jobs, but spurs economic development, eases congestion, and fosters the development of safer, environmentally sustainable and more livable communities by connecting commuters to places of employment, commercial businesses, educational institutions, health centers, and residential areas on a daily basis.

Congress has played a significant role in structuring the New Starts program, with strict criteria, set forth in statute, requiring the FTA to rigorously evaluate and rate New Starts projects according to their projected capital costs, operating costs, and ability to commit local funds to finance at least 40% of the project's construction. In addition, the FTA is required to examine each project's cost effectiveness, mobility improvements, environmental benefits, land use, operating efficiencies, and economic development. Only those projects that achieve established rating thresholds can receive a full funding grant agreement under which Federal funding can be committed.

As you begin to work on the fiscal year 2013 Transportation, Housing and Urban Development & Related Agencies bill, we urge you to fully fund New Starts at \$2.235 billion to ensure that critical transportation initiatives move forward, our infrastructure is improved and enhanced, jobs are created, and our communities remain vibrant places to live and work. The success of our economy hinges on infrastructure investment and the economic development that transportation creates.

Thank you for your consideration. We look forward to your continued support of this essential program.

Sincerely,

Howard L. Berman Janice Hahn Karen Bass

Ray A. Weyman

Brad Sherman

Judy Brown

Jim Ralston

Judy Chu

Gov. J. Napditho

Rinda J. Sanchez

Melanie Waters