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Metropolitan Transportation Authority

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**EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT AND AUDIT COMMITTEE
NOVEMBER 19, 2009**

SUBJECT: FEDERAL LEGISLATION

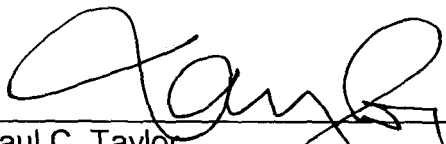
ACTION: ADOPT STAFF RECOMMENDATION

RECOMMENDATION

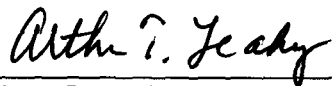
Adopt the following position:

S. 1619 (Dodd) Livable Communities Act of 2009 – A bill that would establish the Office of Sustainable Housing and Communities, establish the Interagency Council on Sustainable Communities, to establish a comprehensive planning grant program and to also establish a sustainability challenge grant program. **SUPPORT**

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Paul C. Taylor
Deputy Chief Executive Officer



Arthur T. Leahy
Chief Executive Officer

BILL: S. 1619

AUTHOR: SENATOR CHRISTOPHER DODD (D-CT)

SUBJECT: LIVABLE COMMUNITIES ACT OF 2009

STATUS: PENDING IN SENATE COMMITTEE ON BANKING, HOUSING AND URBAN AFFAIRS

ACTION: SUPPORT

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Board adopt a **SUPPORT** position on S. 1619, the “Livable Communities Act of 2009” that would create, through a newly established Office of Sustainability Housing and Communities, a comprehensive regional planning grant program.

ISSUE

Earlier this year, the Obama Administration unveiled a Sustainable Communities Partnership between the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and the U.S. Department of Transportation to improve our nation’s planning with respect to housing and transportation options. Later, the partnership was expanded to include the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. The broad goals of this initiative are to; provide more transportation choices for Americans; promote equitable and affordable housing; enhance economic competitiveness; support existing communities; coordinate policies and leverage federal investments and promote walkable neighborhoods. At present, the agencies in this partnership are working together to align their current programs to support the principles outlined above.

Senator Dodd’s legislation was introduced to support and advance the aims of the Administration’s Sustainable Communities Partnership.

PROVISIONS

S. 1619, the “The Livable Communities Act of 2009,” creates a competitive, comprehensive regional planning grant program to provide funding to communities for regional housing and transportation planning. The legislation would permit communities receiving planning grants to receive challenge grants to implement plans by investing in public transportation, transit oriented development, redeveloping polluted sites, and affordable housing.

The legislation provides for the creation of a federal Office of Sustainable Housing and Communities to oversee the Livable Communities grant program authorized by this bill.

Further, the legislation would create a federal Interagency Council of Sustainable Communities that would include representatives from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, U.S. Department of Transportation and the Environmental Protection Agency. This interagency group would be charged with coordinating sustainable development policies.

The legislation authorizes \$100 million a year for four years for comprehensive planning grants, for which consortia of local governments, metropolitan planning organizations, rural planning organizations, or regional councils would be eligible. Grants would be allocated as follows: large metropolitan areas with 500,000 or more people could receive grants up to \$5 million; communities with between 200,000 and 499,999 people could receive up to \$1.5 million, and; smaller metropolitan areas would be eligible for up to \$750,000.

The legislation provides that recipients of planning grants would be eligible for \$3.7 billion of authorized funds in increasing amounts over three years to assist implementation of comprehensive regional plans. Maximum grants range in size from \$100 million for large metropolitan areas to \$35 million for medium-sized metropolitan areas and \$15 million for small metropolitan areas.

IMPACT ANALYSIS

As an agency, we are well positioned to benefit from the grants that would be created under S. 1619. We have, for some time, sought to encourage transit-oriented development projects, which seek to enhance the nexus between housing and transit policies. This effort would be encouraged by the "The Livable Communities Act of 2009," through the creation of a competitive, comprehensive regional planning grant program to provide funding to communities for regional housing and transportation planning. Further, and perhaps more importantly, the legislation would authorize \$3.7 billion, over four years, to assist in the implementation of plans funded through the initial planning grants. These annual grants would range from a maximum of \$100 million for large metropolitan areas, to \$15 million for small metropolitan regions.