



July 22, 2020

The Honorable Mark R. Warner
US Senate
703 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington DC 20510

The Honorable Tim Kaine
US Senate
231 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington DC 20510

The Honorable Denver Riggleman
US House of Representatives
1022 Longworth HOB
Washington DC 20515

Re: Support for the INVEST in America Act

Dear Senators Warner and Kaine and Congressman Riggleman:

The Charlottesville Albemarle Metropolitan Planning Organization of Central Virginia is the forum for cooperative transportation decision-making and transportation planning among the City of Charlottesville, Albemarle County, state and federal officials. The MPO considers long-range regional projects and combines public input, technical data, and agency collaboration to develop forward-thinking and equitable movement solutions.

Organized for the City of Charlottesville and the urbanized area of Albemarle County immediately surrounding the City, the MPO is responsible for carrying out continuing, cooperative and comprehensive transportation planning and programming process. The MPO coordinates the transportation planning activities of the various transportation-related agencies that have both a direct and indirect impact on the Long-Range Plan and Transportation Improvement Program.

As a rapidly growing area of both rural and urban demands, we know that the mobility options we offer can play a huge role in improving the safety, sustainability, and equity of our transportation system. Transit is the backbone of any equitable multimodal transportation system, while shared e-scooter and bike services provide first-mile and last-mile transportation for transit users, as well as an affordable, environmentally friendly alternative to driving in communities where people can reach daily needs such as jobs, healthcare, groceries, and other shopping within a relatively short distance from home. In addition, as we have seen over the past months, a truly multimodal and on-demand system with a range of options offers the flexibility Americans need to adjust to constantly changing circumstances.

According to the 2017 National Household Transportation Survey, more than half of all the trips now taken are 3 miles or less, but nearly three-quarters of them are taken by car, truck or SUV. That same mode choice is taken for more than 60% of even the shortest trips – those of a mile or less. To make a different choice – a healthier, less polluting, more affordable, more resilient choice – people have to be able to feel safe outside a car, which requires infrastructure like wide sidewalks, bicycle facilities, and roads designed for slow travel speeds. It also requires sustained support for multiple types of transit.

Most people take a practical view of transportation. They want it to connect them to opportunities (like jobs and education) and to their daily needs (like shops, pharmacies, health care, banks, friends and family). In other words, they want access. And they want access that is affordable, convenient, efficient, and safe. **The next transportation funding authorization must update our transportation program to prioritize giving all people safe and affordable access to the destinations they need to reach.**

To ensure that the next transportation authorization truly improves mobility for all Americans, we make the following recommendations:

- Provide adequate, sustained capital and operating funding support for public transit as the backbone of an integrated and equitable mobility system, in addition to passing additional emergency relief funding for transit to survive the devastating impacts of COVID-19
- Funding resilient infrastructure, roadway designs, and community programming
- Provide targeted support for integrated multimodal transportation systems and for transit agencies embracing their emerging role as a multimodal mobility manager
- Funding to support innovative models of integration among shared transportation services, from fixed route and on-demand transit to bike-sharing and other micro-mobility and micro-transit services, including bundled packages of transit, micro-transit and micro-mobility trips
- Deploy federal funding effectively to support the transportation needs of vulnerable populations

Federal transportation policy should support a truly multimodal transportation system with robust transit and a wide range of new mobility options. Such a system will ensure that Americans have affordable and convenient access to destinations that are critical to their economic well-being and health, decrease expensive reliance on cars for trips of every length, provide new options for those who cannot drive, and reduce both household transportation costs and environmental impacts. These benefits cannot be realized without federal policy that focuses on access as a performance measure, which would be transformative in delivering more transit service, capacity, and coverage, more bike and pedestrian facilities, more innovations in micro-transit, and improvements in roadway maintenance and state of good repair. Prioritizing access will also increase the value of proximity to goods and services and encourage more housing around transit stops and stations.

Sincerely,

Michael Payne
MPO Policy Board Chair
Charlottesville City Council

Diantha McKeel
Regional Transit Partnership Chair
Albemarle County Supervisor