United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 13, 2022

The Honorable Brian Schatz
Chairman
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on
Transportation, Housing, and Urban
Development, and Related Agencies
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Susan Collins
Ranking Member
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on
Transportation, Housing, and Urban
Development, and Related Agencies
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chair Schatz and Ranking Member Collins,

As you begin work on the Subcommittees' Fiscal Year 2023 THUD appropriations bills, we request $3.5 billion for high-speed rail corridor development, with at least $350 million set aside for planning grants, and report language directing funding to true high-speed rail systems. Investing in these advanced and proven transportation systems will support long-term American economic growth, quality of life, passenger safety, and sustainability.

Compared with other major economies, U.S. surface transportation policy has long ignored serious investment in advanced passenger rail. Even the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, with its historic investment in rail, fails to dedicate a single dollar to the high-speed rail program.

However, regions across the U.S. are launching ambitious high-speed rail infrastructure initiatives, and support for high-speed rail is strong and growing among the American people and in Congress, where it was included in the House-passed Build Back Better Act. A Record of Decision has been completed for international-standard high-speed rail between Charlotte and Atlanta. Washington State's Department of Transportation has projected that an ultra-high-speed trail partnership with Oregon, British Columbia, Canada, and Microsoft could yield a $355 billion return by unlocking a new economic megaregion on a $24 to $42 billion investment.[1] The new Illinois High-Speed Rail Commission will develop plans for high-speed service between Chicago and St. Louis. Private projects are ready for construction in Texas and Nevada, with the latter connecting Las Vegas to the California system.

Americans and the U.S. economy should benefit from the same high-quality, high-speed passenger rail service deployed in other advanced economies such as the UK, the EU, and Japan, where high-speed rail is vital infrastructure that supports commerce, quality of life, and environmental sustainability. In recent years, China has made massive and rapid investments in its own high-speed rail infrastructure. For decades, the U.S. has fallen behind.

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1 Washington State Department of Transportation prepared by WSP, "Ultra-High-Speed Ground Transportation Business Case Analysis," accessed April 13, 2022, https://wsdot.wa.gov/construction-planning/search-studies/ultra-high-speed-rail-study

In addition to its economic and quality-of-life benefits, high speed rail is also a safer mode of intercity travel. In the United States in 2020, 42,060 people died in motor vehicle crashes. Japan inaugurated its first high-speed rail line in 1964, with zero deaths or injuries due to crashes in 58 years.

High-speed rail, an all-electric mode of transportation, also has the potential to dramatically reduce U.S. greenhouse gas emissions. Our transportation sector contributed 29% of United States emissions in 2019.[2] High-speed rail currently emits less carbon per passenger-mile than driving[3] or flying[4] and will emit even less as the U.S. transitions to low or no-emissions power sources.

In addition to $3.5 billion for the federal high-speed rail program, with a 10% set aside for planning grants, we request inclusion of the following report language:

> **High-speed rail assistance.**—The Committee recognizes the importance of high-speed rail for meeting our nation's economic, social, and environmental needs. The Committee also recognizes that defining a corridor as high-speed requires the project to surpass current speed standards. For this purpose, the Committee directs the Secretary of Transportation and Administrator of the Federal Railroad Administration to prioritize grants funded under Chapter 261 of Title 49, United States Code, for passenger rail projects that are reasonably expected to achieve at least 186 miles per hour on new, dedicated right-of-way and 160 miles per hour on shared right-of-way. Additionally, the Committee recognizes the value of building a pipeline of high-speed rail projects for development. In order to achieve a robust national network, the Committee directs the Federal Railroad Administration to prioritize planning grants for communities where there is no current high-speed rail passenger service nor construction.

We respectfully urge you to include the above report language and $3.5 billion total for high-speed rail assistance grants (Chapter 261 of Title 49, United States Code) in the FY23 THUD Appropriations bills. Thank you for your consideration of these requests.

Sincerely,

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2 United States Environmental Protection Agency, "Sources of Greenhouse Gas Emissions," accessed December 20, 2021, https://www.epa.gov/ghgemissions/sources-greenhouse-gas-emissions.

3 Travel and Mobility Tech, "The Environmental Impact of Today's Transport Types," accessed April 18, 2022, https://tnmt.com/infographics/carbon-emissions-by-transport-type/

4 Miller, C. Andrew, "Savings in Per-Passenger CO2 Emissions Using Rail Rather than Air Travel in Northeastern U.S." Journal of the Air and Waste Management Association, accessed April 18, 2022, https://doi.org/10.1080/10962247.2020.1837996

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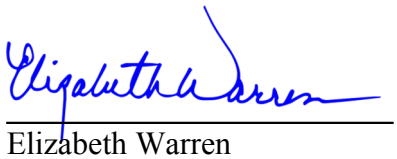

Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator