



**Support Highway Trust Fund Patch:  
Continue Efforts to Pass a Long-term Transportation Bill**

July 22, 2014

Dear Senator:

On behalf of The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, a coalition charged by its diverse membership of over 210 national organizations to promote and protect the rights of all persons in the United States, we urge you to pass a multi-year transportation bill that can provide the needed investments in our nation's transit systems, passenger rail, roads, and bridges, and create jobs to boost our economy. While we are pleased the Senate is acting to avoid the pending default of the Highway Trust Fund, we are disappointed that the proposal (The Highway and Transportation Funding Act of 2014, H.R. 5021) extends funding to May 2015, rather than December 2014, because it delays completing a long-term and urgently needed surface transportation reauthorization bill.

The Leadership Conference strongly supports a long-term reauthorization, because in the absence of adequate funding, transit systems continue to cut service and lay off workers despite record demand.<sup>1</sup> New dedicated funds are also needed to help repair and rebuild our nation's 66,000-plus structurally deficient bridges. Long-term investment is needed to support projects that will provide new or expanded public transportation services at a time when demand for transit services is increasing. This is especially important for communities of color, which are more likely to rely on mass transit to get to work and school than Whites and who, in urban areas, comprise 62 percent of all bus riders.<sup>2</sup>

We applaud Congress's efforts to keep the Highway Trust Fund solvent, but it will only provide for short-term and pressing transportation needs, rather than funding long-term investments. Congress must act quickly in the coming months to pass the long-term, bipartisan reauthorization bill, a process that has already begun in several committees.

In the midst of our transportation crisis, Congress appears ready to kick the can down the road by extending the debate on a long-term transportation bill until next year. Willful delay maintains the status quo, keeping workers off the job, undercutting long-term planning, and hindering the nation's ability to advance to a transportation system that provides for the needs of all its users. This delay is compounded by the unfortunate decision to use funds intended for the unemployment insurance program to plug the Highway Trust Fund. The unemployment insurance program expired nearly six months ago, putting millions of vulnerable workers and families at risk. The program remains a crucial source of protection for unemployed jobseekers, keeps millions out of poverty, and spurs economic growth. We cannot afford to abandon efforts to provide for the restoration of the unemployment insurance program.

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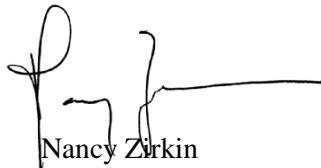


The Senate must continue its efforts to complete a surface transportation bill without waiting for the May 2015 deadline. Waiting until the next deadline or crisis is irresponsible and will only further erode our decaying transportation network and render idle millions of jobs. The Leadership Conference believes that all communities need affordable and accessible transportation systems to safely and efficiently access opportunity and grow their local economies. It is vital that Congress passes in a timely manner a robust multi-year bill and that the funding growth can address the economic need and allow for transit and intermodal investments. If you have any questions, please contact senior counsel, Lexer Quamie at (202) 466-3648 or email [quamie@civilrights.org](mailto:quamie@civilrights.org). Thanks for your attention to this important issue.

Sincerely,



Wade Henderson  
President and CEO



Nancy Zirkin  
Executive Vice President

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<sup>1</sup> American Public Transportation Association, "Impact of the Recession on Public Transportation Agencies," <http://www.apta.com/resources/reportsandpublications/Documents/Impacts-of-Recession-August-2011.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Pucher, J., & Renne, J. L. Socioeconomics of Urban Travel: Evidence from the 2001 NHTS. *Transportation Quarterly* 57(3) (2003).