

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

July 31, 2020

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Leader McConnell and Speaker Pelosi,

As discussions continue on the next COVID-19 relief package, we write to request that you include \$32 billion in additional funding for public transit agencies. While the CARES Act provided short-term relief, in Baltimore the CARES funding will run out in September 2020. The HEROES Act, passed by the House in May, included many critical provisions for American families, but as the pandemic continues, it is clear that the funding level for transit is too low and the distribution mechanism is flawed.

Transit experts have concluded that an additional \$32 billion is necessary to sustain operations across the country. And those funds must be equitably distributed. Because of a funding formula in the HEROES Act that is heavily weighted toward the highest population areas, the Maryland Transit Administration (MTA) would not receive any funding. The Baltimore Urbanized Area is less than 3 million in population (2,203,663), so it would not qualify, despite having ridership in the top 10 per capita in the country for cities with one million residents or higher. Any funding in the next relief package should be distributed in a fair and equitable way that would expand eligibility to more transit agencies throughout the country beyond what the HEROES Act allows. Expanding the recipient pool of these funds will take into account the significant transit ridership levels of mid-size cities like Baltimore, MD.

Baltimore, Maryland is a City that relies on transit. According to an analysis provided to the Central Maryland Transit Alliance, “almost 40% of transit riders in Baltimore are employed in essential services, with hospital and health care workers making up the largest share of those jobs.”¹ Additionally, according to the latest American Community Survey by the U.S. Census Bureau, 28.9% of residents do not have access to a vehicle.² While ridership is down across all modes of MTA, the State still continues to provide indispensable service for essential workers to travel. Without additional funds from the federal government, MTA will likely be forced to make drastic cuts to service and the capital budget.

¹ <https://www.cmtalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/HEROES-Act-Letter.pdf>

² 2018: ACS 5-Uear Estimates Data Profiles

Transit is an essential service that local governments continue to provide even when revenues are down. This additional funding will help prevent cuts to service and potential layoffs of local government employees and ensure that essential workers can continue to get to their jobs.

We urge you to support this funding.

Sincerely,

/s/ Chris Van Hollen

Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator

/s/ Benjamin L. Cardin

Benjamin L. Cardin
United States Senator

/s/ C.A. Dutch Ruppersberger

C.A. Dutch Ruppersberger
Member of Congress

/s/ John P. Sarbanes

John P. Sarbanes
Member of Congress

/s/ Kweisi Mfume

Kweisi Mfume
Member of Congress