



**CONSORTIUM FOR CITIZENS  
WITH DISABILITIES**

April 20, 2020

The Honorable David Price  
Chairman  
Appropriations Subcommittee on  
Transportation, Housing and Urban  
Development  
2358-A Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mario Diaz-Balart  
Ranking Member  
Appropriations Subcommittee on  
Transportation, Housing and Urban  
Development  
1016 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Honorable Nita Lowey  
Chairwoman  
Committee on Appropriations  
H-307 The Capitol  
Washington, DC 20515

Honorable Kay Granger  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Appropriations  
1016 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Price, Ranking Member Diaz-Balart, Chairwoman Lowey, Ranking Member Granger:

The Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities (CCD) Transportation Task Force writes to urge you to increase funding for Department of Transportation (DOT) programs impacting people with disabilities in the FY 2021 Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies (T-HUD) appropriations bill. Accessible public and private transportation is critical to people with disabilities in their day-to-day lives. The level of funding provided for transit and other programs will directly impact the daily lives of people with disabilities. We strongly recommend the following appropriations for FY21, and provide additional detail below:

- **Section 5310** – Increase FY 2021 funding to at least \$291,286,500
- **Section 5311** – Increase FY 2021 funding to at least \$686,765,651 with additional transit grants to rural areas
- **Section 5314** - Fund targeted technical assistance and training not less than FY 2020 level
- **FTA Administrative Expenses** – Direct increase of \$5,000,000 to the Office of Civil Rights
- **NHTSA Vehicle Safety Activities** – Increase funding for inclusive AV research
- **Amtrak** – Fund at not less than FY 2020 levels, plus recovery funds as needed, and increase amounts for ADA compliance
- **U.S. Access Board** – Fund at not less than FY 2020 level

## **Background**

### Accessible Transportation is Key for Employment and Community Living

Accessible, affordable, reliable transportation is necessary for people with disabilities to work, have active social lives, shop, and travel. However, people with disabilities often face difficulties obtaining adequate transportation services to travel daily to their jobs – a factor that contributes to the high unemployment rate and low labor force participation rate for people with disabilities. **In 2019, prior to the pandemic, the unemployment rate for people with disabilities was more than twice that of people without disabilities. Only 31% of working-age people with disabilities were employed, compared to 75% of working-age people without disabilities.**

### Funding must Address the Impacts of COVID 19 on Accessible Transportation

During the pandemic, people with disabilities continue to rely on transit and other transportation services to travel to their essential jobs, or medical appointments, and to shop for groceries, especially when grocery delivery services are limited by geography or increased demand.

After stay at home orders are lifted and businesses open, people with disabilities will depend on paratransit, transit, and local transportation services returning to or expanding their full operating capacity, including service areas, hours, and frequency. FY 2021 appropriations should take into account additional operational needs to recover from the impacts of lost revenue during the pandemic and continuing concerns related to protecting drivers and passengers through the provision of personal protective equipment.

## **Requested Funding**

In order to support this capacity, the CCD Transportation Task Force asks for the following support for transportation programs. If a surface transportation reauthorization bill is passed, we ask the appropriations committee to prioritize people with disabilities in funding any new or modified programs.

**Section 5310, Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities** – Section 5310 funding supports services to promote the mobility and independence of people with disabilities. The Transportation Task Force asks that Section 5310 receive an increase in funding in FY 2021 to at least \$291,286,500. The Disability Access to Transportation Act would increase the authorization levels even higher. **These amounts are *in addition to necessary stimulus funding that should be included in the next COVID legislation.***

**Section 5311, Formula Grants for Rural Areas** – The Task Force supports continued funding for transit, which allows many people with disabilities to be mobile and maintain their independence. All public transit programs are important, and programs supporting rural and small communities are greatly needed to allow access to public transit for people with disabilities in rural areas. Capital grants and Federal Transit Administration (FTA) programs allow local governments, many of whom are facing continuing budgetary challenges, to continue to provide public transit and paratransit services for people with disabilities. The Task

Force supports an increase in Section 5311 funding to at least \$686,765,651 and additional transit infrastructure grants to rural areas.

**Section 5314, FTA Technical Assistance and Training** - Strong technical assistance support is needed to make all these critical systems work for people with disabilities. The Task Force supports continued funding not less than FY 2020 for targeted technical assistance and training activities for people with disabilities.

**FTA Administrative Expenses** – The Transportation Task Force supports HR 6248, the Disability Access to Transportation Act, which would require increased accessibility for reporting disability discrimination complaints to the Office of Civil Rights. To support the increased activities and ensure that OCR more fully meets its obligation to investigate discrimination, we ask for an increase of \$5,000,000 directed to the FTA Office of Civil Rights.

**NHTSA Vehicle Safety Activities** – Autonomous Vehicles have tremendous potential to improve mobility for people with disabilities. However, that potential will only be realized if those vehicles are designed with people with disabilities in mind. The Task Force supports increased funding for Autonomous Vehicle research and testing and asks that you include report language that directs NHTSA to including research and testing for people with disabilities in their activities.

**Amtrak** – The Task Force supports continued investment in a national accessible rail network. We ask that the National Network Grants to the National Railroad Passenger Corporation and Northeast Corridor Grants receive funding not less than FY 2020. We ask that Congress consider additional funding needed to recover from loss of revenue during the pandemic.

In addition, and in accordance with a letter submitted by 31 members of Congress on March 17, 2020, we ask that not less than \$75,000,000 be made available from grants to bring Amtrak served facilities and stations into compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Not less than \$25,000,000 from Amtrak revenues shall be used to bring Amtrak-served facilities and stations into compliance with the ADA. We also support inclusion in report language of a review of the seat removal policy and a holistic assessment and review of all Amtrak policies, procedures, protocols, and guidelines for compliance with the ADA.

**U.S. Access Board** – The Task Force supports continued funding for the U.S. Access Board not less than FY 2020 levels to promote the development of accessible transportation standards.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the FY 2021 T-HUD Appropriations bill. If you have any questions or would like further information, please contact Carol Tyson, Disability Rights Education & Defense Fund, [ctyson@dredf.org](mailto:ctyson@dredf.org), or Sarah Malaier, American Foundation for the Blind, [smlaier@afb.org](mailto:smlaier@afb.org).

Sincerely,

Transportation Task Force Co-Chairs  
Claire Stanley, American Council of the Blind

Sarah Malaier, American Foundation for the Blind  
Lee Page, Paralyzed Veterans of America  
Carol Tyson, Disability Rights Education & Defense Fund

cc:

House

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi, Speaker  
The Honorable Kevin McCarthy, Minority Leader  
The Honorable Pete DeFazio, Chairman  
The Honorable Sam Graves, Ranking Member

Senate

The Honorable Mitch McConnell, Majority Leader  
The Honorable Charles Schumer, Minority Leader  
The Honorable Roger Wicker, Chairman  
The Honorable Maria Cantwell, Ranking Member

*The Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities (CCD) is the largest coalition of national organizations working together to advocate for federal public policy that ensures the self-determination, independence, empowerment, integration and inclusion of children and adults with disabilities in all aspects of society. The Transportation Task Force monitors federal legislation and regulations that address the transportation needs of people with disabilities.*