

April 9, 2018

The Honorable Jimmy Panetta
228 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Re: Proposed Cuts to FY 2019 Transportation Funding

Dear Congressman Panetta:

On behalf of the Monterey County Board of Supervisors, I write to urge you to reject the deep cuts to transportation funding proposed by the President in his FY 2018 budget request. The reduction or elimination of the Federal Transit Administration's (FTA) New Starts/Small Starts program, the Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) grant programs, and Amtrak long-distance routes would have a dramatic impact on transportation options in Monterey County. The County respectfully requests your support in maintaining funding for these programs in the FY 2019 appropriations process.

The President's budget blueprint would eliminate funding for new grants in the FTA's New Starts, Small Starts, and Core Capacity program, which the County has long hoped would help to fund the Monterey Branch Line Light Rail project, and the "Very Small Starts" program, which Monterey-Salinas Transit has hoped would help fund its Highway 1 bus on shoulder/bus on branch line project. Operating a low-cost busway along the Monterey Branch Line corridor is a cost-effective service that would improve regional transit in the Monterey Peninsula and provide a faster commute alternative to the congested Highway 1 freeway.

The budget blueprint also proposes to eliminate the highly competitive TIGER grant program. The County has been a strong supporter of the TIGER program since its inception in 2009, and we have consistently advocated for full funding for the program in order to increase the number of projects that can be funded in this highly competitive grant program. Congress wisely chose to increase funding for TIGER grants in FY 2018.

The County is also very concerned about the proposed elimination of funding to support Amtrak's long-distance routes, which includes the Coast Starlight. The Coast Starlight is currently the only train service on the Central Coast of California, with one round trip per day between Los Angeles and Seattle, stopping in Salinas. When combined with the proposed cuts to the Essential Air Service program, which provides subsidies to the

Monterey Regional Airport, the elimination of the Coast Starlight would be a severe reduction of intercity travel options for Monterey County, leaving us only with bus service or driving.

Thank you for your consideration and support for Monterey County's transportation priorities.

Sincerely,

Luis A. Alejo
Chair, Board of Supervisors

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