

Testimony
Congressman Peter J. Visclosky
House Appropriations Committee
Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies
Fiscal Year 2019 Member Day Hearing
April 18, 2018

I would like to thank Chairman Diaz-Balart, Ranking Member Price, and all of the members of the House Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies Appropriations Subcommittee for holding today's hearing and providing this opportunity for myself and all members to speak about priorities for your Subcommittee in Fiscal Year 2019.

My priority for your Subcommittee in Fiscal Year 2019 remains my resolute support for the Federal Transit Administration's (FTA) Capital Investment Grant program. This essential program supports transit projects across our country, including the expansion and recapitalization of the South Shore Rail Line in Northwest Indiana.

Your Subcommittee demonstrated its steadfast support for this program in Fiscal Year 2018, and I am grateful for your action. As you are well aware, the budget request last year, in Fiscal Year 2018, represented a cut of about \$800 billion and a request to not fund projects without full-funding grant agreements. I thank you for your determination to push back against this proposal and end up with a Fiscal Year 2018 funding level of \$2.6 billion and with language that protects funding for projects in the pipeline. Because of your good work, communities across our nation can continue to plan and move forward with the FTA for projects that are in the early phases of development.

Unfortunately, as we approach Fiscal Year 2019 legislation, we face the same scenario as we did a year ago. The budget request for Fiscal Year 2019 continues a misguided approach of a significant decrease in the funding request for the Capital Investment Grant program, as well as language again that would eliminate funding for projects without a full-funding grant agreement. Specifically, the Fiscal Year 2019 budget proposal requests \$1 billion for the Capital Investment Grant program, which is \$1.6 billion less than the enacted Fiscal Year 2018 funding level.

Chairman Diaz-Balart, Ranking Member Price, and members of the Subcommittee, I respectfully ask that you again flatly reject the inadequate funding level and inappropriate language restriction proposed in the Fiscal Year 2019 budget request.

The Capital Investment Grant program is an integral component of creating economic growth in communities across our nation. I believe that people today, when considering where they want to live, work, or raise a family, are looking at public transportation options. When businesses are considering where they want to locate, and where they think vibrant new employees and markets exist, they are looking at public transportation options. When individuals and families are considering what they want to do this weekend, they are looking at events and attractions that have close proximity to public transportation options.

The investment to improve and expand the South Shore Rail Line in Northwest Indiana is but one example of the vast benefits that this program provides to communities throughout our nation. We have made great strides in Northwest Indiana because of the bipartisan commitment from local officials, state officials, businesses, and non-profit organizations. And we cannot allow this progress to go for naught.

I believe that through the Capital Investment Grant program we are creating a model in Northwest Indiana for how to maximize the potential of taxpayer dollars and make transformational investments that will grow regional economies. I want people to be able to look at Northwest Indiana and say this is how we garner bipartisan support from all levels of the community and the federal government, and this is how we create a return on public transit investments. This is how we attract new people, new businesses, and new jobs through public transportation infrastructure investments, and this is how we improve the lives of all current residents in a community and for future generations.

This type of transformation does not happen without Congressional support. Therefore, I again thank this Subcommittee for your leadership, for your demonstrated value for the Capital Investment Grant program, and again ask for your continued robust support for this critical program in Fiscal Year 2019.