

STATEMENT OF
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BEFORE THE
APPROPRIATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE ON
TRANSPORTATION, HOUSING, AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT AND
RELATED AGENCIES
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Introduction

Chairman Diaz-Balart, Ranking Member Price, and members of the Subcommittee – thank you for the opportunity to meet today to discuss the President’s Fiscal Year (FY) 2019 Budget request for the Federal Transit Administration (FTA).

The FTA’s FY 2019 Budget requests \$11.2 billion. Approximately \$9.9 billion of the request fully funds the fourth year of the Fixing America’s Surface Transportation (FAST) Act, which authorized mandatory levels for FTA’s trust funded programs. This represents a two percent increase in mandatory funding over FY 2018 FAST Act levels. The remaining \$1.2 billion funds FTA’s discretionary grant programs and administrative expenses.

The Budget continues to make strategic and common sense investments in safety and critical public transportation infrastructure through both formula-driven and competitive funding opportunities to address the capital needs of both urban and rural transit systems. Investments in infrastructure ensure mobility and accessibility and help stimulate economic growth, productivity, and competitiveness for American workers and businesses.

Making Transit Safer

The Budget requests almost \$163 million for safety, the Secretary’s top strategic goal. These funds along with rulemaking, guidance, and technical assistance help reduce transit-related fatalities and serious injuries by implementing safety management systems, promoting the use of public transportation agency safety plans, and certifying states that oversee rail transit systems.

Within this amount the Budget includes \$120 million for grants to the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) to improve the safety and reliability of transit service in our nation's capital. This is in addition to \$310 million in Federal formula funds provided annually to WMATA from FTA's core formula grant programs. The Budget also includes \$24.1 million for operational support of State Safety Oversight of rail transit systems. This is critical as all State safety oversight agencies must be certified by FTA by April 15, 2019 or all transit agencies within a state missing that deadline will have FTA funding withheld.

Addressing Transit Infrastructure Needs

The FY 2019 FTA Budget helps address the estimated \$90 billion state of good repair backlog by requesting almost \$10.8 billion for our nation's transit infrastructure. This includes almost \$4.8 billion for formula grants to urban areas, \$656 million for formula grants to rural communities, \$561 million for the Growing States and High Density States, and \$138 million to support metropolitan and state planning.

An additional \$3.4 billion supports State of Good Repair formula grants and buses and bus facilities infrastructure grants and \$1 billion in new budget authority is requested for Capital Investment Grants for 10 projects that have existing or signed full funding grant agreements in place. And to help address the mobility needs of seniors and individuals with disabilities who rely on transit services to get to medical appointments, jobs, and the grocery store, the Budget includes \$280 million.

The President's Infrastructure proposal, consistent with the Budget request, provides a bold new approach for addressing our infrastructure needs across the broad spectrum of Federal programs. It tackles the complex problems of improving infrastructure by focusing on better ways to finance, manage, and use our current and future transportation assets. The proposal also calls for advancements in the permitting process that streamline and shorten timeframes so that projects can get underway quickly. The President's Budget includes \$200 billion for competitive grants and other incentives that will leverage State, local, and private investment resulting in at least \$1.5 trillion of new infrastructure investment over ten years.

We expect that the President's Infrastructure proposal will broaden the options available for funding transit projects in the future and will provide State and local entities more autonomy in deciding which transit-related infrastructure projects to pursue. Consistent with this approach, the President's Budget request limits funding in the Capital Investment Grants program to projects with existing full funding grant agreements.

Innovation

FTA will continue to develop and deploy innovative practices and technologies that improve the safety, mobility, and performance of the nation's public transportation network by fostering innovation – another strategic goal of the Secretary. To support this effort the FY 2019 FTA Budget requests \$28 million for Public Transportation Innovation.

Of this amount, \$12 million supports mobility research to strengthen the capacity of transit agencies and communities as they navigate the dynamic, evolving landscape of personal mobility. Demonstrations will explore innovative business models, partnerships, and private-sector technological tools and solutions for enhanced and seamless mobility options for all travelers. An additional \$5 million supports transformative infrastructure research and research on advance propulsion vehicles.

The Budget also requests \$6 million to conduct research and demonstrations to improve public transportation safety including the development of safety standards. An additional \$5 million supports the National Academy of Sciences through the Transit Cooperative Research Program (TCRP) to produce early-stage applied research that helps prepare the transit industry by identifying new and innovative practices.

Administrative Expenses

The Budget requests \$111.7 million to support a customer-focused, mission-driven, and innovative workforce numbering just over 500 full-time equivalents. FTA manages approximately \$75 billion in active total grants and thousands of transit projects. A significant share of the costs for administering these grants are funded with Administrative Expenses that represent about one percent of FTA's total budget.

The FTA workforce will actively pursue improvement of its efficiency, effectiveness, and accountability through better planning for and managing of human capital, finance, procurement, information technology, and other mission support services. This funding will enable FTA to support safer transit while advancing a transportation system that helps the Nation remain economically competitive through strategic and common sense investments in our nation's urban and rural public transportation systems.

Emergency Relief and Recovery

Finally, while not part of the FY 2019 Budget request, FTA is moving aggressively to allocate the \$330 million provided by Congress in the recently enacted Bipartisan Budget Act of 2018 through its Public Transportation Emergency Relief Program. These funds will help support response, recovery, rebuilding, and resiliency for transit providers affected by Hurricanes Harvey, Irma, and Maria in Texas, Florida, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands.

Thank you again for the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss the FY 2019 Budget request of the FTA.