



606 Dix Road ■ Jefferson City, Missouri ■ 65109

September 6, 2007

The Honorable Ike Skelton
U.S. Representative
2206 Rayburn Building
Washington, DC 20515

RE: FY 2007 Discretionary Transit Capital Program – Sec. 5309 Funds

Dear Congressman Skelton:

After the last election, Congress decided to not earmark in appropriations the FY- 2007 Section 5309 Transit Program that funds capital projects for transit systems nationwide. Instead, Congress decided to let the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) solicit grant applications from systems across the country. FTA did that and members of the Missouri Public Transit Association (MPTA) submitted projects for funding. For years, the 5309 program has been the only funding source to acquire buses for transit systems in Missouri. Through the Congressional earmarking process, Missouri's transit systems have been able to meet transit system bus capital needs.

On August 21, 2007, the FTA announced their decision on how they would use the FY-2007 Transit 5309 funds. They decided to give the \$438 million un-earmarked transit Bus Program funds to only six cities, for their Urban Partnership Congestion Initiative. This initiative is not a SAFETEA-LU authorized program, which makes this announcement an even more troubling issue for transit systems in Missouri. Most Missouri transit systems were counting on receiving at least some of the FY- 2007 funds to further provide riders in our State with safe and affordable trips to work, to continue transportation for visits with their doctors, as well as address other vital mobility needs by which transit is, for many, their only viable form of travel.

When a transit system goes one year without replacing buses, as we recently learned many of our members must now do for FY 2007, it means those systems will fall behind in their ability to keep their systems updated. At the same time, maintenance costs have sky-rocketed upwards so that Missouri's transit systems find it increasingly difficult to provide the current level of transit service for their customers. Additionally, unstable fuel costs have already taken a big bite out of transit system programs in Missouri – to a point where many Missouri systems will have to consider service cuts to make their budgets work.

MPTA finds this "big city/FTA grab for funds" unreasonable and hope that you will work with other Members of Congress to reverse this decision and force FTA to finish the grant projects they have waiting. My understanding is that FTA has all the information to quickly get the grant applications completed and

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announced so that all transit systems in America have an opportunity for getting buses funded, not just the six cities initially selected by the FTA.

This recent decision by the FTA is totally unfair and makes this program not a national program, but a narrow and restrictive USDOT initiative that considers just 45 cities across the country. The unfairness is even more profound in that FTA's selection with Bus Program funds only benefits six cities (San Diego, San Francisco, Miami, Minneapolis, New York City and Seattle).

It is our understanding that the FY 2008 Section 5309 Transportation Appropriations bills also include a 20% set aside for this unauthorized initiative. At this point for FY 2008, transit money to fund that Urban Partnership Congestion Initiative would again come from just the Section 5309 bus program account. This account is the smallest account within Section 5309, but provides more transit systems across the country with vital funding to address transit capital needs. As currently proposed for FY 2008, the other Section 5309 transit accounts, i.e. the transit rail New Starts and fixed guide-way modernization programs, would go untouched for support of this non-authorized Urban Partnership Congestion Initiative.

It is unfair to Missouri taxpayers that we do not get some of the dollars, now being diverted elsewhere, back to Missouri to fund bus projects in support of transit services for Missourians. After all, it's their gas tax money that is paying into the Mass Transit Account of the Highway Trust Fund, so that we, too, can have viable transit systems in our State.

Please do what you can to reverse this decision.

Thank you.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Doris Boeckman". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal line extending from the end of the name.

Doris Boeckman
Executive Director