



July 29, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House of Representatives
1236 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Madam Speaker,

Thank you for your leadership during these trying and unprecedented times. With your leadership, the CARES Act provided needed temporary relief to transit operators all across the Country as we provide essential service to keep workers moving during the pandemic. Unfortunately, for the Golden Gate Bridge, Highway and Transportation District (District), that money will run out this fall, prior to our country overcoming the pandemic and a true reopening of our nation's economy.

When the CARES Act was enacted, no one anticipated that at summer's end our society, public health and economy would be in the troubled state that we find ourselves today. The pandemic and associated economic fallout were not expected to linger this long. So as Congress deliberates on pending legislation to combat the COVID-19 pandemic and resulting economic recession, the District strongly urges that the next pandemic relief bill include at least \$32 billion for our nation's public transit industry.

In the absence of additional federal assistance, the District will have little choice but to furlough many of our employees. In addition to impacting these dedicated employees and their families, the associated contraction of our transit system would impact the region's ability to fully reopen.

As you know, in addition to owning and operating the Golden Gate Bridge, the District has a fleet of buses and ferries that provides an alternative to driving in the Golden Gate Corridor. Prior to COVID-19, 23 percent of all weekday trips from Marin and Sonoma Counties into San Francisco between 5:00 a.m. and 9:00 a.m. were on our buses and ferries. This significant patronage reduces traffic congestion and greenhouse gas emissions and contributes to the overall quality of life in San Francisco and the region.

The full reopening of our nation's economy, particularly in urbanized areas such as the San Francisco Bay Area, cannot occur unless public transit survives the economic fallout arising from the pandemic and thrives anew. The road network simply cannot accommodate a full economic recovery in the absence of successful mass transit. The same is true in major metropolitan areas throughout the country.

Many people thought that COVID-19 would be under control at this juncture, with a commensurate growth in our regional and national economies. Depressed travel in the Golden Gate Corridor serves as evidence that such a recovery has not occurred. Today, the District's bus

ridership is down about 80% and ferry ridership is down over 98% relative to pre-COVID-19 ridership levels. Bridge traffic – which helps subsidize our transit operations - is down 40% compared to normal traffic levels prior to the pandemic. As a result, the District is facing a corresponding drop in Bridge tolls and transit fares of approximately \$2 million per week.

In response to the shelter-in-place orders, the District reduced the frequency of bus and ferry service. Our goal with the adjustments has been to right-size our transit service to maintain social distancing while recognizing that running empty buses and ferries is not prudent. We have also implemented additional daily cleaning measures to keep the public and our employees safe, which adds to our operational expenses. The CARES Act has been instrumental in providing paychecks to our employees and medical benefits for them and their families while they provide transit service to essential workers in a new, sanitized and socially distanced fashion.

The District requests assistance in securing federal funds to continue providing essential service on our buses and ferries to bridge us to the full reopening of the economy. In the absence of additional funding, the District will, unfortunately, have to curtail transit service and furlough employees. To avoid this outcome, and to help assure that our transit partners in the region and around the country can similarly maintain their employee and service levels, we ask that \$32 billion be included in the next pandemic relief bill.

The District strongly urges you to act to protect public transit agencies and critical infrastructure from future revenue losses and service cuts due to the COVID-19 crisis. I would look forward to addressing any questions, concerns, or ideas you may have in this regard, and offer my thanks for all that you have done for the Bridge over the years.

Sincerely,



Denis J. Mulligan
General Manager