

To: MP&L Committee

Date: January 21, 2020

From: Rick Ramacier  
General Manager



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**SUBJECT:** Draft 2020 Federal Legislative Program

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### **Background:**

Staff has begun draft of the 2020 Federal Legislative Program and the associated pamphlet. This program is updated annually and highlights County Connection's legislative priorities at the federal level. The program also includes information about County Connection, ridership, innovation, and important transit benefits.

The issues that we identified as important to County Connection in 2020 are very similar to those of 2019. Therefore, staff proposes a program that is much like the one in 2019.

### **Issues**

1. Fund the federal transit program in FY2021 at levels consistent with the Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act. County Connection is projected to receive just over \$1.5 million in federal funding to assist in supplying Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) paratransit services in FY21.
2. Urge that Congress re-authorize FAST in timely manner. Furthermore, we urge Congress to include a level of funding for public transit equal to what is called for by the American Public Transportation Association (APTA) in its booklet titled, "APTA Recommendations on Surface Transportation Law." In this document, APTA calls for a six-year re-authorization that provides \$145 billion to bring public transit to a state of good repair and to meet growing community demands for improved mobility choices.
3. Find a permanent fix to the growing shortfalls in the Highway Trust Fund (HTF) and the related Mass Transit Account (MTA). Both of these are on target to be essentially bankrupt by the end FY21 according to most experts. Thus, projects that are programmed for funding from these accounts will be unable to be completed. The potential funding at risk for County Connection is well into the millions and involves on-going critical support for ADA paratransit services as well replacing our diesel fleet with zero emission based electric buses.
4. Create a new funding program in the next re-authorization to provide demonstration project funding for first & last mile public transportation solutions that both are innovative and provide mobility integration. While funds would be granted to public transportation providers as defined, these grantees would be allowed to fully partner with other public entities as well as private sector partners or non-profit partners to being about demonstration projects under this new funding category. Up to 10% of the federal transit program should be applied to this.
5. Modernize the federal definition of public transportation to support and encourage public transit evolving into mobility integrators. This will allow public transportation providers to take advantage of new technologies that create opportunities to offer innovative, cost effective, and higher quality services without being hamstrung by the current decades old federal definition of public transportation. Any update should maintain longstanding

definitions that a public transportation service is “publically-funded” and that private organizations cannot be independently eligible for federal funding.

6. Ensure that any legislation that Congress considers in providing further bus driver protections, does not unintentionally take away from the needs of any and all passengers. Or that it unintentionally does not imply that public transit is not a very safe mode of transportation.

### **Program Format**

Staff is suggesting we keep the current format of federal legislative program document. A draft mock up of proposed program will be available at your meeting for review and comment.

### **Action Requested:**

Staff requests that the MP&L Committee review the draft 2020 Federal Legislative Program and provide feedback and direction at your meeting on February 6, 2020. Staff further requests that this item be forwarded to the Board of Directors for adoption.