

County Connection

INTER OFFICE MEMO

To: MP&L Committee

Date: 01/27/2022

From: Bill Churchill, General Manager

SUBJECT: Draft 2022 Federal Advocacy Program

Background:

Attached you will find the first draft of County Connection's Federal Advocacy Program, highlighting the Authority's top priorities for 2022. The need for an on-going reliable federally funded transit program remains crucial to the ability of County Connection to provide reliable, safe, and effective service to its communities.

Program Presentation Format and Congressional Office Meeting Visits

At this time last year, the COVID-19 pandemic required congressional office visits to be completed remotely. This led the Authority to facilitate a number of meetings with its delegation virtually, including the presentation of our Advocacy Program through a brief PowerPoint presentation and PDF based leave behind regarding our interests.

While we are not completely out of the pandemic, the Authority is still under discussion about what visits with our delegation will look like this year. Thus, staff will be providing a PowerPoint presentation draft to the MP&L Committee for review, highlighting the Authorities top priorities and a focus on our essential services. Staff is prepared to convert this presentation to a brochure if it is determined that we have the ability to safely meet in person.

Financial Implications:

None.

Recommendation:

Staff recommends forwarding a final draft of the 2022 Federal Advocacy Program to the Board of Directors for action.

Action Requested:

Staff requests that the MP&L Committee review the draft program and priorities, provide feedback on the content, and consider forwarding to the Board of Directors for action.

Attachments:

1. Draft 2022 Federal Advocacy Program Priorities
2. Staff will provide a PowerPoint presentation to the MP&L Committee at its February 3, 2022, meeting.

2022 FEDERAL ADVOCACY PROGRAM

County Connection relies on federal transit funding for necessities crucial to the Authority. The CARES, CRRSAA, ARP, and the IIJA Acts together have placed County Connection in reasonable financial condition as we hopefully begin to emerge from the Pandemic. However, the need for an on-going reliable federally funded transit program remains critical to enable County Connection to provide reliable, safe and effective service to its constituents. Thus, County Connection supports the following:

Priority #1: FY23 Federal Public Transit Appropriations

County Connection relies on federal funds for the timely completion of capital projects and to support its services to folks with disabilities. In FY23, we are expecting to receive roughly \$1.5 million in 5307 formula funding to support our ADA paratransit program. This program serves the most frail members of our community and was crucial in providing life line based services during the height of the Pandemic. We also will pursue formula funding to help with our continued transition to an all Zero Emission Based (ZEB) fleet. To ensure that we receive this critical capital funding, the federal transit program must be fully funded at levels consistent with the levels set out in the House passed INVEST Act and/or the recently enacted IIJA.

Priority #2: Re-authorization of the Federal Transportation Bill

While we applaud the enactment of the IIJA as it will bring \$107 billion to public transit over five years, it is not the re-authorization of the federal transportation bill. IIJA is also paid for outside of the federal highway and transit trust funds. In order to address long term transit needs in an adequate and predictable manner, we seek re-authorization of The Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act (FAST) which has effectively expired.

Historically, County Connection has received \$8 million dollars in federal support on an annualized basis from federal transportation acts and authorizations. These funds are primarily used to replace aging buses and vans for far cleaner and reliable buses. Thus, re-authorization of FAST is a top priority for County Connection.

The House passed the INVEST Act to re-authorize FAST. This bill increases the federal investment in public transit by 133% over FAST. We applaud this. County Connection urges that this legislation be taken up in the Congress in 2022 for further action.

Priority #3: Enact APTA's Recommendations on Mobility & Innovation

The American Public Transportation Association (APTA) have adopted a set of recommendations for federal enactment to promote and support innovative mobility solutions to increase the ability of all sorts of people to use public transportation throughout their everyday lives. These innovations in mobility must serve to improve and enhance traditional public transportation, not replace it. These innovations should also promote and provide opportunities to prepare the next generation of public transportation workers through work force development programs.

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Many areas such as the one County Connection serves need to greatly improve their public transportation options to attack the housing crisis, climate change, equity, and aging population. However, historical growth patterns in these areas make traditional public challenging to provide. Thus, innovative mobility solutions are needed. They will also make established transit in these areas more effective and increase ridership.

Public transit agencies like County Connection are well positioned to deliver these innovative solutions along with their traditional fixed route services in an integrated and coordinated manner, if allowed to and support by federal policy.

Priority #4: Restore the Federal Highway and Mass Transit Accounts

With the Federal Highway and Mass Transit Accounts nearly broke, more and more of the federal transit program is at risk of not being funded. We urge that a permanent fix to this problem be found. Without financial stabilization for these accounts, many County Connection projects will be at risk.

Priority #5: Supporting Directed Spending Request(s) From CCTA

Directed Congressional Spending (Earmarks) are alive and well and in the FY22 federal budget to as much as \$40 billion depending on how it's defined. The Contra Costa Transportation Authority (CCTA) was successful in securing such funding from both the offices of Congressman DeSaulnier and Congressman Swalwell for projects that have good benefit and application to County Connection's mission. CCTA may seek more of such funding in 2022. County Connection should be a partner in those efforts should they come.