

To: MP&L Committee

Date: December 28, 2018

From: Rick Ramacier
General Manager



Reviewed by:

SUBJECT: Draft 2019 Federal Legislative Program

Background:

Staff has begun draft of the 2019 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 2018 remain for 2019. Therefore, staff proposes a program that is nearly identical to the one in 2018. However, the draft adds language to address the feedback we are hearing out of Washington DC about possible increases in competitive grant funding and the return of something akin to earmarks.

Issues

1. Fund the federal transit program in FY2020 at the authorized levels of 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 FY20. If the federal transit program is not fully funded in FY19, those two projects could be at risk.
2. Urge that public transit be adequately included in any major infrastructure package that may move through Congress. In addition to the occasional comments coming from the Administration on interest in a comprehensive infrastructure package, the new incoming Chair of the House Transportation & Infrastructure Committee, Peter DeFazio of Oregon has indicated strong interest in moving a transportation infrastructure package. County Connection should urge that any such package contain meaningful funding for public transit. There is a projected \$90 billion shortfall to keep the current transit systems in a state of good repair. This does not include building in any new capacity.
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, left to no attention many projects that are programmed for funding from these accounts will go without leaving said projects unable to be completed. County Connection should urge that Congress and the Administration greatly increase their efforts to fund the massive shortfalls in the HTF and bring financial stabilization to it.
4. Reforming and updating federal regulations and rules. US Department of Transportation (DOT), Secretary Chow has maintained a consistent interest in reforming and updating federal transit rules. Particular attention is being paid to rules that may impede the use of technology in the delivery of public transportation and/or prevent public transportation from taking full advantage of new service schemes under the umbrella of shared mobility or micro transit. However, to date, the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) has done nothing more than twice ask the greater transit community for detailed input on which federal regulations should be relaxed or reformed. Because

many of these federal rules and regulations so impede some of things County Connection might pursue, County Connection should urge DOT on as they pursue these reforms. And, we should urge Congress to be supportive of their efforts.

Program Format

Last year, with input and direction from the MP&L Committee, the program pamphlet received an updated look and presentation. Staff is prepared to use a similar format this year to summarize and highlight our federal legislative interests. Or, if the MP&L Committee would like to go over the format for additional updating or changing, there is plenty of time to consider that. A mock up draft of a proposed 2019 Federal Legislative Program pamphlet will be distributed at your meeting on Thursday, January 10, 2019. This pamphlet will look very similar to the 2018 one.

We will also bring copies of the recently completed “County Connection Innovations” pamphlet that has received a good deal of positive feedback for you to mull over in terms of format.

Action Requested:

Staff requests that the MP&L Committee review the draft 2019 Federal Legislative Program and provide feedback and direction at your meeting on January 10, 2019. Staff asks for your discussion and feedback on both content as well as presentation. Staff will then return to the MP&L Committee in February with the next draft having incorporated your comments.