

## 2024 FEDERAL ADVOCACY PROGRAM

County Connection relies on federal transit funding for crucial capital and operational funds to ensure the implementation of a reliable and robust public transportation system. The CARES, CRRSAA, ARP, and the IIJA Acts together placed County Connection in reasonable financial condition as we 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: Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act Reauthorization**

County Connection relies on vital federal funds to support essential programs such as conversion to a Zero Emission Vehicles (ZEV) fleet, ADA paratransit and lifeline services. A fully funded appropriation of the IIJA is imperative to keep these programs moving forward and functioning. Additionally, the Authority strongly supports the re-authorization of the IIJA to ensure a strong funding platform supporting public transit into the future.

### **Priority #2: 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.

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 supported by federal policy.

### **Priority #3: Restore the Federal Highway & Mass Transit Fund**

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.

# County Connection

2477 Arnold Industrial Way Concord, CA 94520-5326 (925) 676-1976 countyconnection.com

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## **Priority #4: Community Project Funding Request**

County Connection is committed to converting the existing fleet of diesel buses to Zero Emission Vehicles (ZEV's) in compliance with the California ICT regulation. The Authority currently has a fleet of Battery Electric buses that must rely on the local electric utility to provide energy to charge the vehicles. In order to provide resilient essential electrical power to ensure County Connection can operate during natural disasters the Authority is seeking a community project grant to fund the installation of a Hydrogen Fuel Cell Generator. This will allow the Authority the ability to continue to operate battery electric buses in the event the local utility is incapable of providing power.