

February 7, 2011

The Honorable Patty Murray
Chairman
Senate Appropriations
THUD Subcommittee
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Richard Shelby
Ranking Member
Senate Appropriations
THUD Subcommittee
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Tom Latham
Chairman
House Appropriation
THUD Subcommittee
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable John Olver
Ranking Member
House Appropriations
THUD Subcommittee
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Senator Murray, Senator Shelby, Representative Latham, and Representative Olver:

Access to transportation is absolutely essential for older adults and provides opportunities to remain independent and involved in community life. In order to make sure that older adults and people with disabilities continue to have increasing mobility options, we, as members of the Senior Transportation Task Force coalition urge you to continue to invest in community-based transportation programs.

We request that funding for the remainder of fiscal year 2011 for the Sec. 5310 Transportation for the Elderly and Persons with Disabilities Program that provides formula funding to support community-based specialized transit programs serving older adults and people with disabilities be consistent with the annual funding growth during SAFETEA-LU.

In addition, we request that fiscal year 2011 funding for the following transit programs also be consistent with the annual funding growth during SAFETEA-LU:

- Sec. 5311 Formula Grants for Other than Urbanized Areas Program;
- Sec. 5311(c) Public Transportation on Indian Reservations Program;
- Sec. 5316 Job Access and Reverse Commute Program; and
- Sec. 5317 New Freedom Program.

We recognize that in this unprecedented fiscal environment, you are faced with incredibly difficult choices about funding priorities. However, mobility is a huge unmet need for older adults as it is and the need is only growing as our nation ages. These programs have a significant impact on the ability of older adults to access and participate in their communities for a relatively small investment.

We also request that you fund the National Center on Senior Transportation (NCST) at \$2 million, a \$1 million increase above its current funding level. The NCST is authorized under SAFETEA-LU and the project has been funded since fiscal year 2006. Administered by Easter Seals in partnership with the National Association of Area Agencies on Aging and funded through a cooperative agreement with the Federal Transportation Administration, the NCST promotes mobility for older adults. The NCST was officially launched in January 2007 and has undertaken education, outreach and technical assistance activities in support of its mission: “to increase transportation options to enable seniors to live more independently in their communities throughout the US.” Just a few of the highlights of the recent work of the NCST include the following:

- Completion of local demonstration projects in seven communities testing innovative, sustainable and replicable approaches for meeting seniors’ unique mobility needs. Results and best practices from the demonstration grants are in the process of being developed and will be disseminated

broadly;

- Completion of eleven technical assistance grants and support for five transportation coordination coalitions;
- Hosting a highly successful inaugural Senior Transportation Institute (STI). This three-day in-person training and technical assistance event brought together ten four-person, community teams selected through a competitive process. The teams will have ongoing technical support from NCST staff;
- Publication and broad dissemination of the recommendations of a National Coalition on Mobility Needs of Culturally and Ethnically Diverse Elders and incorporation of the recommendations in the NCST's ongoing work;
- Development of new resources focused on the state of senior transportation, including personal profiles of transitions from driving to public transportation, and materials targeted to caregivers assisting loved ones with transportation needs;
- Creation of the student scholar program to provide the opportunity for university graduate students to conduct research on issues that impact older adult mobility;
- Administration of a broad based survey of the aging network on the transportation needs of older adults in their communities;
- Coordination of well-regarded and attended long-distance learning events on issues such as transportation coordination, "complete streets," occupational therapy and driver safety; and funding opportunities; and
- Implementation of day-long education programs at the nations leading aging conferences.

The increased funding of \$1 million for the NCST that we are requesting is necessary to meet the growing need of individuals and local communities for information, technical assistance, training and other support to more effectively address the mobility needs of older adults within resource constraints and growing demand for services. This additional funding will allow the NCST to develop focused demonstration initiatives designed to test cutting-edge ideas, support replication and adaptation of best practices, strengthen current collaborative efforts with other national organizations to facilitate coordinated transportation at the community-level, develop educational materials to address the needs of older persons, caregivers, aging and transportation agencies and broaden the NCST's outreach efforts.

The Senior Transportation Task Force is an informal coalition of national aging and transportation organizations working together to advocate for national public policy that ensures access to transportation for older adults.

If you have any questions or comments about this request, please contact Jennifer Dexter with Easter Seals (202-347-3066) or jdexter@easterseals.com) or K.J. Hertz with the National Association of Area Agencies on Aging (202-872-0888 or khertz@n4a.org). Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Easter Seals
Jewish Federations of North America
LeadingAge
National Association of Area Agencies on Aging (n4a)
National Association of States United for Aging and Disabilities
National Congress of American Indians
National Council on Aging

cc: House and Senate THUD Subcommittee Members