

April 13, 2021

The Honorable Scott Peters
1201 Longworth House Office Building
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Cathy McMorris Rodgers
1035 Longworth House Office Building
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Marilyn Strickland
1004 Longworth House Office Building
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mike Gallagher
1230 Longworth House Office Building
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representatives Peters, McMorris Rodgers, Strickland, and Gallagher:

Our organizations write to express strong support for the *Build More Housing Near Transit Act of 2021*. If enacted, the legislation will maximize federal investment in fixed-guideway transit by ensuring the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) takes a holistic and quantitative approach to evaluating the potential for affordable and market-rate housing development near transit alignments and station areas. The relatively small change in current evaluation criteria that this bill proposes can positively impact the availability of housing for all people in transit-served locations across the country. We applaud you for your continued – and bipartisan - leadership on this issue and encourage you to work with your colleagues to ensure its passage.

The United States is in the middle of a severe housing shortage and affordability crisis exacerbated by the economic toll of the COVID-19 pandemic. According to Up for Growth’s research, from 2000 – 2015, the country failed to produce the 7.3-million homes needed to keep pace with growth. This shortage of homes means families are paying more for rent. Americans are often living further away from jobs and critical services. Younger people are becoming homeowners at historically low rates, homelessness is on the rise, and the country is not living up to its full economic potential. Approximately half of the United States’ renter households are cost-burdened, spending more than thirty percent of their income on housing costs. As of March 2021, nearly one in six renter households were not current on rent, with renters of color disproportionately behind on payments.

The *Build More Housing Near Transit Act* would take steps to solve these challenges by spurring the much-needed housing development near transit locations and fulfilling critical transit, housing, economic development, and environmental goals. It would achieve this by making some minor but essential enhancements to the evaluation criteria for the FTA’s Fixed Guideway Capital Investment Grants Program, or Section 5309 grants. While real estate and economic development potential is currently part of the evaluation, each factor is considered individually rather than holistically. As a result, projects can receive funding when the potential for affordable and market-rate housing development is nearly impossible, while projects ripe for affordable housing development are denied funding.

For example, a city applying for transit dollars could have exorbitant impact fees or restrictive land-use policies that effectively prevent housing from being built in the vicinity of a transit stop. Yet, these policies alone would not disqualify a project applicant from receiving funding. As a result, the Section 5309 Grant Program’s adjacent goals of enabling “transit-supportive land use” and “economic development” often go unrealized.

If it becomes law, the *Build More Housing Near Transit Act* would require project applicants to submit a housing feasibility assessment which some transit authorities already conduct and would not otherwise be a significant added expense or requirement. An applicant that demonstrates the feasibility of and a commitment to building housing near transit would effectively earn bonus points during the evaluation process. In addition, the *Build More Housing Near Transit Act* would add “a commitment of local land-use policies to accommodate affordable and market-rate housing development associated with the project” to go along with a demonstrated financial commitment from the applicant.

The *Build More Housing Near Transit Act* was initially introduced in the 116th Congress as H.R. 4307. Though not enacted, the proposal was included as a provision in H.R. 2, or the *Moving Forward Act*, which passed the House of Representatives in July 2020. In the 117th Congress, we believe the *Build More Housing Near Transit Act* can and should find a home in the infrastructure package that Congress will soon debate. It is a smart, bipartisan, and low-cost solution needed to improve America’s infrastructure and Americans’ quality of life.

From encouraging more thoughtful planning, to supporting more inclusive housing policies, to enabling more efficient use of federal dollars, the *Build More Housing Near Transit Act* is a sound policy and the product of a collaborative process. Its passage will enable housing that uses less land, takes cars off the road, and allow people to live closer to opportunity. Thank you again for your diligence on this critical legislation, and we look forward to working with you to pass it.

Sincerely,

National Organizations

American Institute of Architects (AIA)
American Planning Association (APA)
Commercial Real Estate Finance Council (CREFC)
Congress for New Urbanism (CNU)
Enterprise Community Partners
Family Promise
Grounded Solutions Network
Habitat for Humanity International (HFHI)
Housing Advisory Group (HAG)
Leading Builders of America
Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC)
LOCUS: Responsible Real Estate Developers and Investors
Mortgage Bankers Association (MBA)
National Apartment Association (NAA)
National Association of Home Builders (NAHB)
National Association of Real Estate Brokers (NAREB)
National Association of REALTORS® (NAR)
National Community Stabilization Trust (NCST)
National Housing Conference (NHC)
National Housing Trust (NHT)
National Leased Housing Association (NLHA)
National Low-Income Housing Coalition (NLIHC)
National Multifamily Housing Council (NMHC)
National NeighborWorks Association
Prosperity Now
ReFrame Foundation

Smart Growth America (SGA)
The Real Estate Roundtable
Transportation for America (T4A)
Up for Growth Action

State and Local Organizations

1000 Friends of Oregon (Oregon)
Abundant Housing LA (Los Angeles, California)
AIA Austin (Austin, Texas)
Alliance for Housing Solutions (Arlington, Virginia)
Apartment Association of Metro Denver (Denver, Colorado)
Apartment Association of North Carolina (North Carolina)
Arlington Partnership for Affordable Housing (Arlington, Virginia)
Bay Area Council (San Francisco, California)
Bellevue Chamber of Commerce (Bellevue, Washington)
Bicycle Colorado (Colorado)
Boulder Housing Partners (Boulder, Colorado)
Business for a Better Portland (Portland, Oregon)
California YIMBY (California)
Circulate San Diego (San Diego, California)
City of Eugene Downtown Neighborhood Association (Eugene, Oregon)
Climate Action Campaign (California)
COHHIO (Ohio)
Colorado Coalition for the Homeless (Colorado)
Congress for New Urbanism Central Texas Chapter (CNU-CTX) (Austin, Texas)
Downtown Austin Alliance (Austin, Texas)
Easterseals Serving Central Texas (Austin, Texas)
Fifth Square PAC (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania)
Georgia Advancing Communities Together (ACT), Inc. (Georgia)
Good Business Colorado (Colorado)
Greater Charlotte Apartment Association (Charlotte, North Carolina)
Greater Greater Washington (Washington, D.C.)
Habitat for Humanity of Lincoln (Lincoln, Nebraska)
Housing Association of Nonprofit Developers (HAND) (Washington, D.C.)
Housing Authority of the City and County of Denver (DHA) (Denver, Colorado)
Housing Development Consortium of Seattle-King County (Seattle, Washington)
Idaho Smart Growth (Idaho)
Los Angeles Business Council (Los Angeles, California)
Maine Affordable Housing Coalition (Maine)
Master Builders of King and Snohomish County (Seattle, Washington)
NAIOP Pittsburgh (Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania)
NAIOP Washington State (Washington)
NARI MN (Minneapolis-St. Paul, Minnesota)
Neighborhood Housing Services of Greater Berks (Reading, Pennsylvania)
New York State Association for Affordable Housing (New York)
Non-Profit Housing Association of Northern California (Northern California)
Northern Ohio Apartment Association (Columbus, Ohio)
Northern Virginia Affordable Housing Alliance (Northern Virginia)
Northern Virginia Transportation Alliance (Northern Virginia)
Oakland Chamber of Commerce (Oakland, California)

One SouthCoast Chamber (New Bedford, Massachusetts)
Open New York (New York, New York)
Oregon Smart Growth (Oregon)
Pennsylvania Foundation for Housing (Pennsylvania)
Portland: Neighbors Welcome (Portland, Oregon)
Portland Business Alliance (Portland, Oregon)
Regional Plan Association (New York, New York)
Reno + Sparks Chamber of Commerce (Reno, Nevada)
Seattle 2030 District (Seattle, Washington)
Seattle for Everyone (Seattle, Washington)
Sightline Institute (Seattle, Washington)
SPUR (San Francisco, California)
The 2030 Group (Washington, D.C.)
The Southwest Fair Housing Council (Arizona)
Transit Forward Philadelphia (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania)
Transportation Choices Coalition (Seattle, Washington)
Urban Environmentalists (California)
Urban Land Conservancy (Denver, Colorado)
Virginia Apartment Management Association (Virginia)
Washington Multi Family Housing Association (Washington)
Welcome Home Coalition (Portland, Oregon)
YIMBY Action (California)
YIMBY Law (California)

CC: The Honorable Pete Buttegeig, Secretary of the United States Department of Transportation
The Honorable Marcia Fudge, Secretary of the United States Department of Housing and Urban
Development
The Honorable Chuck Schumer, United States Senate Majority Leader
The Honorable Mitch McConnell, United States Senate Minority Leader
The Honorable Nancy Pelosi, Speaker of the United States House of Representatives
The Honorable Kevin McCarthy, Minority Leader of the United States House of Representatives
The Honorable Sherrod Brown, Chairman of the United States Senate Committee on Banking,
Housing and Urban Affairs
The Honorable Patrick Toomey, Ranking Member of the United States Senate Committee on
Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs
The Honorable Peter DeFazio, Chair of the United States House Committee on Transportation and
Infrastructure
The Honorable Sam Graves, Ranking Member of the United States House Committee on
Transportation and Infrastructure