Dear Acting Administrator Williams:

As you know, Congress appropriated $25 billion in emergency funding in the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act to ensure Americans—including frontline health care workers, law enforcement, first responders, and other safety personnel—do not lose access to reliable transit during the Covid-19 pandemic, and to ensure frontline transit workers have access to personal protective equipment (PPE). We appreciate the work of you and Federal Transit Administration (FTA) staff in adhering to the very tight timeline we provided to get this immediate financial relief to transit agencies across the nation. We write to request further assistance in ensuring transit agencies receive federal support in acquiring PPE and in updating your guidance to transit agencies to ensure more robust safety protections are put in place for frontline workers.

In the brief time since Congress passed this historic funding, we have already seen the tragic death of frontline transit workers as a result of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19). Jason Hargrove, a bus driver in Detroit succumbed to the virus after sharing with the world his experience of a passenger who refused to cover his mouth while coughing on the bus. In New York, more than a dozen transit worker deaths have been attributed to COVID-19, and nationally estimates are more than 25 transit workers have died as a result of COVID-19.

The Guidance FTA issued last Thursday, noted that FTA did not recommend the use of PPE at that time. Since then, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) issued guidance recommending members of the public cover their face with cloth when in public. We believe FTA should explicitly update its guidance and proactively provide support to help transit agencies acquire PPE and provide it to their workers. Further, we urge FTA to work with transit agencies to ensure:

- buses, trains, streetcars, and worker facilities, including crew rooms are regularly disinfected;
- rear-door boarding to maintain a safe distance between riders and transit operators, where feasible;
- that safety precautions are taken to protect transit workers from touching the same digital screen, keyboard, or fingerprint-scanning device, e.g. for timekeeping purposes;
- transit riders are encouraged to cover their faces with makeshift protective implements such as bandanas or scarves while riding public transit and that riders observe proper social distancing; and
- brave front line workers are afforded death benefits.
Thank you for your timely attention to this.

Sincerely,

Gary C. Peters /s/  
Gary C. Peters  
United States Senator

Mazie K. Hirono /s/  
Mazie K. Hirono  
United States Senator

Kirsten Gillibrand /s/  
Kirsten Gillibrand  
United States Senator

Kamala D. Harris /s/  
Kamala D. Harris  
United States Senator

Edward J. Markey /s/  
Edward J. Markey  
United States Senator

Elizabeth Warren /s/  
Elizabeth Warren  
United States Senator

Robert P. Casey, Jr. /s/  
Robert P. Casey, Jr.  
United States Senator

Margaret Wood Hassan /s/  
Margaret Wood Hassan  
United States Senator

Tammy Baldwin /s/  
Tammy Baldwin  
United States Senator

Amy Klobuchar /s/  
Amy Klobuchar  
United States Senator

Richard Blumenthal /s/  
Richard Blumenthal  
United States Senator

Maria Cantwell /s/  
Maria Cantwell  
United States Senator

Robert Menendez /s/  
Robert Menendez  
United States Senator

Charles E. Schumer /s/  
Charles E. Schumer  
United States Senator

Bernard Sanders /s/  
Bernard Sanders  
United States Senator

Michael F. Bennet /s/  
Michael F. Bennet  
United States Senator

Cory Booker /s/  
Cory Booker  
United States Senator

Jeanne Shaheen /s/  
Jeanne Shaheen  
United States Senator

Benjamin L. Cardin /s/  
Ben Cardin  
United States Senator

Richard J. Dirbin /s/  
Richard J. Dirbin  
United States Senator