

-NEWS RELEASE-

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**VIRGINIA TRANSIT ASSOCIATION CALLS FOR BIPARTISAN SUPPORT OF TRANSIT
FUNDING**

Falls Church, VA – Congress must put aside partisan concerns and tackle the looming infrastructure crisis that threatens the economic health and safety of our communities. The Virginia Transit Association (VTA) today called on Congressional leaders to join together and focus on the critical infrastructure needs of our Commonwealth and nation. Investment in public transportation is an economic boon, creating jobs in communities of all sizes and returning \$4 to the economy for every \$1 invested. It's time to address the backlog in transit state of good repair, which currently stands at \$90 billion.

While President Trump has called for a \$1 trillion investment in infrastructure, his proposed 2018 budget cuts billions of dollars from existing transportation and public infrastructure programs. The federal government currently covers just 43 percent of all capital spending for public transit and any cuts will only add to the significant shortfall that already exists.

The American economy and communities of all sizes would be losers if the proposed reductions to the Federal Transit Administration's Capital Investment Grants (CIG) and Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) programs and Amtrak are enacted. The U.S. is already underinvesting in public transportation, as noted by the D- grade in the recently released American Society of Civil Engineers infrastructure report card.

Cuts to the CIG program would put public transit projects and the thousands of jobs associated with them at risk. Alexandria's [West End Transitway](#), which connects the Van Dorn Street Metrorail Station to the Pentagon Metrorail Station, is in jeopardy, as it does not have a Small Starts Full Funding Grant Agreement in place. Richmond's bus rapid transit initiative, scheduled to start running this fall, could not have been launched without a \$25 million TIGER grant.

Hampton Roads could also suffer, as a robust and enduring New Starts/Small Starts program is essential for any future extension of high capacity transit beyond the current 7.4-mile light rail starter line in Norfolk. The extension under study is to Naval Station Norfolk, the largest naval station in the world.

While the full effect of the White House's budget won't be known until a more detailed version is released next month, President Trump's statement pertaining to New Starts – "Future investments in new transit projects would be funded by the localities that use and benefit from these localized projects." – is of grave concern to mobility providers. A loss of federal dollars, when combined with an impending state transit funding gap in the Commonwealth, threatens our economic growth and quality of life.

Transit is the backbone of Virginia's economy, attracting jobs and residents to the Commonwealth. [A video \(http://bit.ly/2fUq28r\)](http://bit.ly/2fUq28r) by the [Virginia Transit Association](#) looks at the consequences of the potential funding gap through the eyes of four transit providers in the state. An October [report by the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation](#) (DRPT) details a possible \$1.1 billion gap between state transit capital funding needs and projected state revenues over the next decade. These projections highlight the serious challenge faced by the Commonwealth in identifying long-term, sustainable transit capital funding. DRPT estimates that the statewide funding deficit averages \$107 million per year, growing markedly in beginning in fiscal year 2021. That's when state-of-good-repair needs alone would exceed available revenues.

According to a recent American Public Transportation Association (APTA) poll, most Americans, including President Trump supporters, would not support these cuts to public transportation. A 2016 poll showed that three out of four Americans support increased investment in public transportation. Additionally, a November election poll found that 81 percent of Americans who voted for Donald Trump oppose any cuts to current levels of public transportation investment.

VTA calls on Congress to reject the President's cuts and reaffirm its support for transit funding programs as part of the fiscal year 18 budget process. In addition, VTA urges Congress to increase investments in public transportation as part of any new infrastructure initiative.

To learn more about transit in the Commonwealth and the need for sustainable funding, contact the Virginia Transit Association. VTA is a coalition of transit professionals from public and private organizations who recognize the value public transportation brings to individual mobility, economic sustainability, a clean environment, and livable communities. Visit VTA at <http://vatransit.com> or call us at 804-643-1166.

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