

MONTGOMERY COUNTY 2021 FEDERAL PRIORITIES

TRANSPORTATION

- **Invest in bus infrastructure.** Appropriate funding for infrastructure investments to improve bus transit, with an emphasis on Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) corridors like Montgomery County's Phase 1 BRT system and the State of Maryland's Corridor Cities Transitway (CCT). Provide increased funding in fiscal year 2022 (FY22) for competitive discretionary programs as well as formula grant programs. Appropriate funding to and expand the Federal Transit Administration's (FTA) Capital Investment Grant program to fund new transit systems, particularly New Starts and Small Starts, with a focus on BRT. Increase funding for the U.S. Department of Transportation's BUILD Discretionary Grant program.
- **Improve Commuter Rail.** Expand funding availability to improve the quality and effectiveness of the State of Maryland's MARC Commuter Rail system including capacity expansion of the Brunswick line and its station and park-and-ride facilities. These improvements would allow all-day, two-way train service and the addition of stations in high-priority growth areas like Shady Grove and White Flint. Coupled with investments in run-through service in Washington, D.C., better Commuter Rail could be the key to increasing the connectivity between the dynamic activity centers within the National Capital Region.
- **Support clean vehicle fueling networks.** Develop clean fueling (hydrogen and electric) networks through implementation of charging and fueling infrastructure grants that promote phasing out gas-powered vehicles. Improve access to economies of scale so local jurisdictions can benefit and apply for resulting technologies. Fund local governments' ability to develop and implement long-range plans to accelerate deployment of charging and refueling infrastructure, with priority to infrastructure at workplaces, existing multi-unit dwellings and low-income communities. Include funding for utility infrastructure upgrades.
- **Fund transit operations and community connections to achieve equity.** Continue funding sustaining transit as the Country recovers from COVID-19 to avoid loss of services to transit-dependent communities and to avoid increased reliance on single occupancy vehicles. Provide competitive opportunities for local governments to explore transit pilot programs that use transit as a tool to promote equity. To promote investment in and adoption of transit in a way that will have positive effects on quality of life and climate change, treat transit as a public service available to all, similar to public schools and libraries. Implement Community Connectivity Pilot Program for planning and construction of projects to restore connections between communities historically impacted by highway development.

- **Reauthorize Passenger Rail Investment Improvement Act (PRIIA).** Adopt a multi-year PRIIA reauthorization of at least \$150 million each year. Annual appropriations will be matched by local jurisdictions and should increase gradually to support the transit backbone of the Washington Metropolitan region.
- **Prioritize safety.** Provide a safety incentive program with formula funding for States and Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) with a significant portion of funding to be suballocated, to support improving transportation safety for vulnerable users (e.g., people walking, bikers, and with disabilities) by including Vision Zero priorities and actions to work towards ending traffic deaths. Provide funding opportunities to support local governments in developing and employing a universal design approach so that public infrastructure is accessible, understandable, safe, and useful for all. Shift funding priorities to support investment in modification of existing infrastructure to better accommodate safe travel by all roadway users.
- **Invest in Transportation Demand Management (TDM).** Support creation of a TDM formula grant program (separate from the Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) program) as a cost-effective approach to promote use of alternatives to personal-auto-focused transportation modes including teleworking, qualified transportation fringe benefits, and improved cycling and pedestrian infrastructure. Reinstating the bicycle benefit within federal qualified transportation fringe benefits and adopting H.R. 384, the Bicycle Commuter Act or similar proposal to expand the benefit to include entire range of low- or no-emissions micromobility devices. Pass H.R. 382, the Adopt the Bikeshare Transit Act or similar proposal to amend federal code to include micromobility projects (i.e. bikeshare, e-scooter) under the umbrella of transit improvements eligible for federal transit funds. TDM strategies will advance climate goals, expand racial equity and health benefits, and encourage more effective use of existing infrastructure.
- **Fund programs that renew infrastructure and support adaptation and resilience in response to climate change.** Modify programs to prioritize funds invested in existing maintenance backlog for pavement, storm drain systems, and street tree maintenance. Develop or expand funding programs for systematic safety programs and programs that measure, or reduce vehicle miles travelled (VMT), while prioritizing access to jobs and economic opportunity. Provide formula and discretionary programs for local governments to improve resilience of critical infrastructure including transit systems, bridges and culverts, roadway, and trail networks.
- **Promote use of electric vehicles (EVs) and zero emission vehicles (ZEVs).** Implement a formula carbon reduction incentive program for projects that reduce on-road mobile source of carbon emissions from transportation. Support legislation to accelerate the use of EVs and ZEVs. Include provisions to enable low- and moderate-income households to benefit from these technologies and extend and enhance tax credits and other incentives (e.g., cash grants for eligible lower income recipients) for sale of new and used ZEVs and for charging and alternative refueling facilities. Include e-bikes in federal tax credit and rebate programs for lower cost solutions for those not requiring cars.

- Increase appropriations for FTA's Bus and Bus Facilities program to support purchases of low- or no-emission buses and necessary bus facilities through its discretionary program for low- or no-emissions bus deployment projects (Federal Transit Act §5339). Expand reauthorization to allow for expansion of electric bus fleets and charging infrastructure without penalty for age and quality of existing fleets.

TELECOMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY

- **Radio frequency (RF) and small cell standards.** Request responsibility for setting RF standards be transferred from the Federal Communications Commission (FCC)- a regulatory agency- to the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST)- a standards setting body. Direct NIST to complete a review of credible published papers on the health effects of RF emissions on humans, including women and children, and tests to measure biological impact on humans, and thermal and biological tests of RF at different frequencies within 6 months. Further direct NIST to create and update thermal and biological standards for smart phones, small cells, and household Internet-of-Things (IoT) devices, Wi-Fi, and Bluetooth devices within 2 years and review and update standards every 5 years thereafter.
- **Communications Act and Spectrum Act.** Clarify Communications Act and Spectrum Act to affirm that local governments are not limited to cost recovery, to enable local governments to charge market-based rents for use of public rights-of-way, streetlight lights, and street furniture and generate funding to address the digital divide locally.
- **Communications Act and Public, Educational and Government (PEG) channels.** Clarify Communications Act to ensure that cable operators may not charge local governments for the value of PEG channels that cable operators are required to provide under federal law. Under the Biden administration, the new FCC has been tasked with undoing harm created by the previous administration. A statutory change will eliminate the ability of partisan administrations to make arbitrarily changes that negatively impact local community news and information.

ENVIRONMENT

- **Address climate change.** Advance legislation increasing federal funding to local governments for climate change mitigation and resilience actions including funding for green and resilience banks to facilitate private investment in domestic low-carbon, climate-resilient infrastructure. Adopt legislation to phase out gas-powered vehicles, establish a carbon tax, and expand federal tax credits for solar installations.
- **Create environmental conservation corps.** Support funding for an environmental restoration conservation corps offering training and education on environmental restoration necessary to address climate change and restore America's ecosystems.

EDUCATION

- **Fund Title I and Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).** Support full funding for Title I and IDEA which provides billions of dollars nationally to public education for disadvantaged children and disabled children.
- **Increase supply of school-based social workers.** Fund higher education degrees in social work and practicum opportunities for masters' degrees for individuals serving K-12 students. Anticipate shortage of social workers to meet students' mental health needs due to unfinished learning challenges from the pandemic.

LIBRARIES

- **Fund Institute for Museum and Library Services (IMLS).** Support Library Services and Technology Act providing funds for crucial library services during the pandemic including expanded access to digital content, digital service, and Wi-Fi lending. Adopt S. 284/H.R. 1003 or similar proposal supporting library services and technology needs stemming from COVID-19.

HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

- **Adopt immigration reform.** Support comprehensive immigration reform legislation, including a pathway for permanent residence and citizenship, and eligibility for unemployment benefits and healthcare coverage through Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP). Our economy benefits from the spending power of immigrant consumers, and our communities are stronger and more resilient when every resident has access to affordable healthcare.
- **Support aging and disabled residents.** Increase appropriations for U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) Congregate Housing Services Program (CHSP) providing programming and staffing for housing individuals with complex needs. CHSP funds critical housing and continuity of care support for frail elderly, nonelderly disabled, and temporarily disabled residents with persistent and pervasive behavioral health issues preventing premature and unnecessary institutionalization. Support legislation in 117th Congress addressing access to ALS critical therapies (introduced as H.R. 8662/S. 4867 in the 116th Congress). Support legislation in 117th Congress addressing dependency and indemnity compensation from the Department of Veterans Affairs (introduced as H.R. 3221/S. 1047 in the 116th Congress).
- **Address mental health issues after COVID-19.** Fund federal health programs directed toward mental and behavior health for school-aged youth and families struggling with long-term trauma from extended isolation, death of family and friends, economic hardship, and housing instability. Funding should extend for not less than three years beyond end of pandemic.

HOUSING

- **Address and prevent homelessness.** Increase FY22 appropriation for HUD's Housing Trust Fund by \$20 billion, and HUD's Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher program. Support President Biden's plan for universal housing vouchers addressing housing inequities and poverty. Specifically, require direct portion of additional Housing Choice Vouchers for conversion to project-based vouchers for use by non-profit and for-profit affordable housing developers.
- **Adopt the Neighborhood Homes Investment Act (S. 98).** Sponsored by Senator Cardin, S. 98 would create a tax credit program to incentivize affordable homeownership by providing a tax credit to investors that subsidize the gap between what it costs to build or rehab and what the home can sell for. This could be a game changer on ownership in certain communities. We urge our Congressional delegation to support this initiative.
- **Address housing affordability.** Increase annual federal funding for key housing and community development programs needed to address recovery in communities most impacted by COVID-19 (e.g., Home Investment Partnerships (HOME) program, and Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program).

FINANCE

- **Restore Advance Refunding Bonds.** Reverse provision of Trump tax cuts and adopt S. 479 or similar proposal amending the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to restore tax-exempt status of Advance Refunding Bonds. Restoring tax-exempt treatment of advance refunding bonds provides County flexibility to restructure and manage its debt.

WSSC

- **Authorize low-income water utility assistance program.** Make permanent the temporary Low-Income Water Utility Bill Assistance program included in CRRSAA and ARPA. Provide FY22 appropriations helping customers cover drinking water and wastewater utility bills.
- **Support direct financial assistance to water utilities during pandemic.** WSSC Water experiencing significant economic fallout from COVID-19. Expected consequences are rate increases or decreases in preventive maintenance. Establish permanent federal assistance program comparable to utility assistance in energy sector.
- **Increase funding for critical waste and wastewater repair, replacement, and rehabilitation.** Adopt comprehensive multi-year infrastructure package authorizing water and wastewater program funding. Critical to environmental health, public health, and national economy.