



U.S. Department of Transportation  
Federal Transit Administration

**U.S. House Committee on Transportation & Infrastructure  
Subcommittee on Highways & Transit  
“Oversight of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act: Modal Perspectives”  
Testimony of FTA Administrator Nuria I. Fernandez  
Wednesday, December 13, 2023, 10:00 AM**

Good morning, Chairman Crawford and Ranking Member Holmes Norton. Thank you for this opportunity to talk about President Biden’s Bipartisan Infrastructure Law.

The Federal Transit Administration has been hard at work delivering the first two years of the largest investment in public transportation in American history, making available nearly \$40 billion to transit operators in communities nationwide.

That is on top of our continued administration of critical emergency relief funds; all told, we have invested more than \$63 billion in almost 9,000 projects since November of 2021. And our work is far from done.

In Arkansas, thanks to the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, Jonesboro received nearly \$2,000,000 to transition to hybrid diesel-electric buses.

For the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe in South Dakota, a \$600,000 Tribal Transit grant means more reliable trips on a new bus and van, expanding transit across a 4,200-square-mile reservation.

Trains, buses, ferries – and equipment to maintain and modernize them – are being Made in America at over a thousand companies nationwide.

FTA’s Capital Investment Grants program also continues building community-improving projects: from \$240 million in Minneapolis-St. Paul to expand a successful transit network into historically-underserved communities, to \$150 million in Pittsburgh, building high-capacity bus transit along one of the busiest corridors in the Steel City. Both will reduce traffic and emissions – and help thousands get to jobs, school and healthcare.

FTA is carefully following transit ridership trends nationwide. In the past two years, ridership has increased to about 77% of pre-COVID levels. As agencies better understand community needs, and adjust service to meet those needs, some agencies are actually seeing ridership above pre-pandemic levels.

Agencies large and small have redesigned bus routes, creating better service outside of traditional hours, providing equity of opportunity. To help that process, FTA funded 50 projects in 24 states to plan and adapt to these new patterns.

Communities, including some of our largest cities, do face fiscal challenges in transit operations. However, providing transportation for the people of our nation is not a responsibility we can simply decline. So, President Biden proposed expanded flexibility in how Federal transit funds can keep America moving.

In the minds of some, transit is important only in those big cities. Yes, urban areas are using increased transit investment to enhance regional economies. However, transit provides more than economic value to communities in urban, rural, and suburban communities across the country, and it also shows a moral commitment to leaving no American behind.

For every subway commuter, a veteran rides a paratransit van to a medical appointment at the VA hospital. For every college student heading to class, a small-town worker rides to job training – both take the bus toward a successful future. For every Millennial riding transit to his first job in the big city, a rural Baby Boomer has the freedom transit provides to grow old in her hometown.

In Mississippi, FTA funded transit covering 26 rural counties. A woman in Jackson told me about her husband, who was in the hospital. She had a doctor’s appointment, and he normally drove her. So, for the first time, she used on-demand transit. Her house is on a dirt road that doesn’t even have a name. The transit driver picked her up, took her to her doctor, and returned her home. She said she never thought she would be one of “those people” who needed the services we support.

Like millions of riders, she discovered transit when she needed it the most.

Thanks to the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, many people are experiencing more freedom thanks to more service. We still have work to do. Decades of underinvestment created a \$105 billion backlog in state of good repair that we are addressing.

Manufacturing transit vehicles must become more efficient and less expensive. Transitioning to a zero-emission future requires reskilling and increasing the transit workforce, centering equity to ensure that underrepresented populations are recruited, trained, and retained. FTA is working to meet those challenges, including through 34 projects using registered apprenticeships to train the workforce of the future in this year’s Low-No program alone.

We are also working to end assault against transit workers with every tool at our disposal. It is unacceptable to Secretary Buttigieg, and me, that any public servant should worry about whether they will return home safely from work. Among other measures, we will soon issue a General Directive on Required Actions Regarding Assaults on Transit Workers to make sure agencies are acting to address this issue as soon as possible.

We know that for every dollar invested in American transit, five dollars of value is created. But, the impact of transit is shown not only on bottom lines. It is measured at the bottom step, when riders exit through open doors, into a wider world of opportunity.

Thanks to the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, that world is closer than ever, as we build more American vehicles, train more American workers, and connect more Americans with their communities and the opportunities they offer.

I look forward to your questions today.

Thank you.

