

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

April 24, 2020

The Honorable Peter DeFazio
Chairman House Transportation &
Infrastructure Committee
United States House of Representatives
2134 Rayburn HOB
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Sam Graves
Ranking Member House Transportation &
Infrastructure Committee
United States House of Representatives
1135 Longworth HOB
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House
United States House of Representatives
H-232, U.S. Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
United States House of Representatives
H-204, U.S. Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman DeFazio, Ranking Member Graves, Speaker Pelosi, and Leader McCarthy:

As the United States Congress works on legislation to address the nation's infrastructure, we write to ask you to include support that will address the unique transportation challenges in Houston and Harris County, Texas.

Harris County is the most populous county in the State of Texas, and its fastest growing. The U.S. Census Bureau just announced that, according to its 2019 data, Harris County is the third most populous county in the entire country, smaller than only Los Angeles County, California and Cook County, Illinois. And it is also the third-fastest growing county in the country. Over the last few years, on average, more than 250 people have moved to the Houston area *each day*.

For all its benefits, this population growth has challenged the area's infrastructure, including its transportation infrastructure. Improvements to transportation infrastructure have not kept pace with the area's rapid growth. And that rapid growth is expected to continue. The region's population is expected to grow from 7 million people to more than 10 million over the next 20 years. Yet the development of public transportation, from rail lines to bus routes, continues to lag behind other metropolitan regions in Texas, which have received significantly more federal investment for many years. At the same time, the area has the most congested roadways in the Texas. And those roadways have highest death rate in the state. A recent *Houston Chronicle* analysis of sixteen years of federal highway data revealed that Houston is the most deadly major metro area in the nation "for drivers, passengers, and people in their path"—equating the death toll to three fully-loaded 737s crashing and killing everyone on board each year.

The Metropolitan Transit Authority of Harris County (METRO) has developed a plan to address the acute need for improved, multi-modal public transportation and reduce congestion on the roadways. Its METRONext plan will add 500 miles of travel improvements through bus, light rail, and inter-modal service. Many of these proposed projects will connect different areas in the region, including underserved communities throughout Harris County to Houston's world-class institutions, like the Texas Medical Center, and to key locations, such as the airports and downtown. The goals are to take more cars off the roads, to offer new service and travel options, and to fund critical safety projects for the health, safety, and mobility of the region.

The region's residents are invested in this plan. In a November 2019 referendum, voters in the service area approved METRO's authority to borrow up to \$3.5 billion for the METRONext plan. It is our request that, as you consider a new infrastructure package, you will keep in mind and similarly support the growing, unique, and critically important needs in Houston and Harris County. Thank you for your consideration of our request.

Sincerely,



Lizzie Fletcher
Member of Congress



Al Green
Member of Congress



Sheila Jackson-Lee
Member of Congress

Sylvia Garcia
Member of Congress