



September 11, 2019

The Honorable Scott Peters
 2338 Rayburn House Office Building
 United States House of Representatives
 Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Cathy McMorris Rodgers
 1035 Longworth House Office Building
 United States House of Representatives
 Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representatives Peters and McMorris Rodgers:

We write to voice our collective support for the *Build More Housing Near Transit Act*. The *Build More Housing Near Transit Act* seeks to maximize federal investment in fixed-guideway transit by ensuring the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) take a holistic and quantitative approach to evaluating the potential for affordable and market-rate housing development near transit alignments and station areas. The small change in language in evaluation criteria that this bill proposes can create a positive impact on the availability of housing for all people in transit-served locations across the country.

As you know, the United States is in the middle of a severe housing shortage and affordability crisis. According to Up for Growth National Coalition’s research, from 2000 – 2015, the country failed to produce the 7.3-million homes needed to keep pace with growth. This shortage of homes means families are paying more for rent, often living further away from jobs and critical services, fewer families are becoming new homeowners, and the country is not living up to its full economic potential. Nearly half of the country’s renter households are cost-burdened, spending more than thirty percent of their income on housing.

The *Build More Housing Near Transit Act* would spur the development of much-needed housing near transit locations, fulfilling critical transit, housing, economic development, and environmental goals. It would achieve this by making some small but important enhancements to the evaluation criteria for the FTA’s Fixed Guideway Capital Investment Grants program, or Section 5309 grants. While real estate and economic development potential is currently part of the evaluation, each factor is considered individually rather than holistically. As a result, projects can receive funding when the potential for affordable and market-rate housing development is nearly impossible, while projects ripe for housing development are denied.

For example, a city applying for transit dollars could have exorbitant impact fees or restrictive land use policies that effectively prevent housing being built near transit. Yet these policies alone would not disqualify a project applicant from receiving funding. As a result, the Section 5309 Grant Program’s adjacent goals of enabling “transit-supportive land use” and “economic development” are often not realized.

This legislation would require project applicants to submit a housing feasibility assessment, which some transit authorities already conduct and would not otherwise be a significant added expense or requirement. Along with other factors, the assessment would be considered holistically and quantitatively in project evaluations. In addition, the *Build More Housing Near Transit Act* would add “a commitment of local land use policies to accommodate affordable and market-rate housing development associated with the project” to go along with a demonstrated financial commitment from the applicant.

Our organizations are united in the belief that the *Build More Housing Near Transit Act* deserves swift consideration. From smarter planning, to rational housing regulation, to effectively and efficiently spending federal dollars, this legislation represents sound policy that is the product of a thoughtful and collaborative process. Its passage would mean communities can realize needed housing that uses less land, takes cars off the road, and provides housing opportunities for all people closer to jobs, schools, and amenities.

Thank you again for your diligence on this important legislation and we look forward to working with you to ensure its passage. If our organizations can be of further assistance, please let us know.

Sincerely,

American Planning Association
Circulate San Diego
Enterprise Community Partners
Habitat for Humanity
Housing Advisory Group
Local Initiatives Support Corporation
Mortgage Bankers Association
National Apartment Association
National Association of Home Builders
National Association of REALTORS®
National Housing Trust
National Leased Housing Association
National Multifamily Housing Council
Prosperity Now
Regional Plan Association
Up for Growth Action