Dear Chairman DeFazio and Ranking Member Graves:

On behalf of the Mortgage Bankers Association (MBA), I am writing to express our views regarding specific provisions of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee’s markup of the INVEST in America Act, scheduled for June 9, 2021.

Section 2702: Property disposition for affordable housing

MBA supports the inclusion of language from the Promote Affordable Housing Near Transit Act, as introduced by Rep. Adam Smith (D-WA), which would make it possible for local and regional transit agencies to play a role in solving the affordable housing crisis being experienced by so many communities. This provision would create a process for non-governmental entities with a satisfactory track record of developing affordable housing to receive a land transfer from a federal transit grant recipient at zero cost. Beneficiaries of donated land must agree to set aside 40 percent of total units as affordable for thirty years to households with incomes at or below 60 percent of area median income. The Department of Transportation will provide oversight, ensuring that participants only build housing that meets program requirements on land donated under the program.

Section 2703: Affordable housing incentives in Capital Investment Grants

MBA supports the inclusion of language from the Build More Housing Near Transit Act, as introduced by Rep. Scott Peters (D-CA) and Reps. Cathy McMorris Rodgers (R-WA), Marilyn Strickland (D-WA), Derek Kilmer (D-WA), Lisa Blunt Rochester (D-DE), David Scott (D-GA), Ami Bera (D-CA), Alan Lowenthal (D-CA), and Tom Suozzi (D-NY), which would would maximize federal investment in fixed-guideway transit by ensuring the Federal Transit Administration (FTA)
takes a holistic and quantitative approach to evaluating the potential for affordable and market-rate housing development near transit alignments and station areas. By making some minor but essential enhancements to the evaluation criteria for the FTA’s Fixed Guideway Capital Investment Grants Program (Section 5309 grants), this provision has the potential to positively impact the availability of housing in transit-served locations across the country. While real estate and economic development potential is currently part of the Section 5309 grant evaluation process, each factor is considered individually rather than holistically. This proposal will ensure that projects ripe for affordable housing development are given additional scrutiny.

Conclusion

Thank you in advance for your consideration of the views expressed within this letter. We stand ready to work with all Members of the Committee as discussions regarding housing as a part of the debate on infrastructure continue to advance in the House.

Sincerely,

Bill Killmer
Senior Vice President
Legislative and Political Affairs

cc: All Members, Committee on Transportation & Infrastructure