

Dear Senator Mazza,

Thank you for all your hard work and commitment to ensuring Vermonters have access to affordable, convenient and equitable transportation options. At a time, when employers are challenged with recruiting employees, it is so important for employers to be confident and supported with a sustainable suite of transportation options for their existing and future employees.

I have not formally met you, but I certainly know you as I am a long-time resident of Colchester. In my work role, I am Executive Director of the Chittenden Area Transportation Management Association (aka CATMA), a non-profit organization founded in 1992 by the three Hill Institutions (Champlain College, UVM and UVM Medical Center). We also serve Chittenden County businesses, developers and municipalities with transportation demand management (TDM) services (see attached). For the past 30 years, CATMA and its members have invested and committed to encouraging, incentivizing and supporting commuters to get to/from work by bus, bike, walk, transit, carpool, vanpool, bikeshare. We have had much success over the years, pivoted our focus the past couple years to provide the workforce with telework support and resources to safely commute, and moving forward we will work diligently and creatively to re-engage and attract commuters back to transit, carpool and shared transportation which also reduces the burden on our roads, ensures efficient land use and assists with our State's climate goals.

I am writing to you in regards to the proposed appropriation from the transportation fund for the purpose of implementing statewide zero-fare public transit service in FY23, including in Chittenden County. At this time, I believe the recommendation is to provide \$1.43 million to support keeping all GMT routes fare free. This is a reduction from the original proposed H.552. As the Senate Transportation Committee discusses this particular item over the next couple weeks, I urge the Committee to consider increasing the appropriated funds for fare free transit, keeping in mind the increase of gas prices transit is experiencing and fleet operations. We cannot afford any reduction in services at a time when employers are struggling with recruiting employees. Actually, this is an opportune time to make improvements in our transportation network and strengthen it to a more robust network, using creative funding, technology and partnerships as the pandemic transitions.

In addition, transportation is the largest source of greenhouse gas emissions in Vermont. Transportation expenses hit Vermonters in their pocketbooks here and now. On average, Vermonters spend over 15% of their incomes on transportation. Experts in Vermont and across the country argue that equitable access to transportation is a critical method to cut costs, particularly in rural communities. In practice, this means phasing out internal combustion engines, fully electrifying our transportation network and expanding convenient access to public transportation.

CATMA's responsibility is to ensure our members, employers, developers and community in Chittenden County have access to convenient, affordable and sustainable

transportation options. It only seems practical the State support and invest in transit, fare free service and expanded routes, not a reduction in service. With strategic planning, we can also ensure that Vermonters face lower transportation costs and a lighter carbon footprint. This work is central to preserving Vermont's natural resources and beauty for future generations.

As we move through a traumatic pandemic, it is a time to demonstrate how compassionate and innovative Vermonters are.

Thank you for your time Senator Mazza, and please let me know if you have any questions or need any further information.

Sandy

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