

May 3, 2022

The Honorable David Price
Chair, Appropriations Subcommittee on
Transportation, Housing and Urban
Development, and Related Agencies
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mario Díaz-Balart
Ranking Member, Appropriations
Subcommittee on Transportation,
Housing and Urban Development, and
Related Agencies
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Brian Schatz
Chair, Appropriations Subcommittee on
Transportation, Housing and Urban
Development, and Related Agencies
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Susan Collins
Ranking Member, Appropriations
Subcommittee on Transportation,
Housing and Urban Development, and
Related Agencies
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chair Price, Chair Schatz, Ranking Member Díaz-Balart, and Ranking Member Collins,

We write to request that the Bureau of Transportation Statistics (BTS) be provided \$20 million during the fiscal year 2023 appropriations process. Such funding would ensure that BTS can support evidence-based policymaking in transportation and infrastructure as requested in the President's FY23 budget request and as stipulated in the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA).

BTS is the principal federal statistical agency that tells us how, how sustainably, and how safely people and commodities move within the United States and across our borders. BTS also tells us how transportation contributes to and enables the nation's economy. Its key products include statistics on freight, economic trends, spatial accessibility and the availability of transportation services, airline performance, and precursor accident and safety data.

The requested funding would support the President's [FY23 initiatives](#) to (i) "better understand equity as it relates to the transportation cost burden, multimodal access to key resources, and other equity considerations"; (ii) "measure the vulnerability of the transportation system to direct and indirect disruptions caused by extreme weather and other unexpected events"; and (iii) "collect small-area, equity-related data and develop/estimate outcome measures for use in the DOT Learning Agenda." The funding would also support three BTS programs required under IIJA: (i) study of economic competitiveness effects of transportation system; (ii) freight and supply chain benchmark statistics series; and (iii) federal support for local decisionmaking. Please see the enclosed document for additional details.

BTS is funded through authorization of the Highway Trust Fund at \$26 million in FY22 and \$26.25 million

in FY23. Since 2003, BTS has [lost 40 percent of its purchasing power](#), which reduces its ability to meet critical missions, maintain ongoing programs and legislative mandates, and meet emerging needs. Without appropriations support to supplement its HTF funding, BTS will be hampered in achieving both the Administration's priorities and the IJA BTS provisions.

Thank you for your consideration.

AAA

American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials

American Bus Association

American Highway Users Alliance

American Planning Association

American Public Transportation Association

American Road & Transportation Builders Association

American Society of Civil Engineers

American Statistical Association

Association for Public Data Users

Association of Academic Survey Research Organizations

Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations

Center for Data Innovation

Consortium of Social Science Associations

Council of Professional Associations on Federal Statistics

Information Technology and Innovation Foundation

Institute for Transportation and Development Policy

Institute of Transportation Engineers

Intelligent Transportation Society of America

National Association for Business Economics

National Association of Counties

National Association of Development Organizations

National Association of Regional Councils

National League of Cities

Natural Resources Defense Council

Rail Passengers Association

State International Development Organizations

CC: Enclosure: The stakeholders' case for \$20 million in FY23 appropriations for BTS

Bureau of Transportation Statistics: Data to Help Our Communities and Economy Thrive

The case for \$20 million in appropriations for BTS in fiscal year 2023

\$20 million in appropriations for BTS in FY23 restores the agency's budget to its FY03 level when adjusted for inflation and is needed in the following ways:

1. Funding the Administration's [FY23 BTS Budget Requests](#): \$10 million

- **“Transportation Vulnerability and Resilience Data Program –** Requests \$3 million to establish a new program to measure the vulnerability of the transportation system to direct and indirect disruptions caused by extreme weather and other unexpected events (e.g., Colonial pipeline cyber-attack, pandemic like COVID-19, other supply chain disruptions) and the ability of the national transportation system to recover from those disruptions...”
- **“Departmental Office of Evaluation Research Program –** Requests \$4 million to implement evaluation research and collect equity-related data to support Administration Priority Goals. \$3 million will support the [BTS] to collect small-area, equity-related data and develop/estimate outcome measures for use in the DOT Learning Agenda; and \$1 million for BTS to complete the data collection of its National Transit Geospatial Database...”
- **“Development of the Transportation Cost Burden and Other Access Measures –** Requests \$3 million to complete the Equity Action Plan action items under core area of Expanding Access. This request includes efforts to better understand equity as it relates to the transportation cost burden, multimodal access to key resources, and other equity considerations. The funding will allow BTS to improve data, conduct research, and develop methodology to estimate the direct and indirect impacts of transportation programs to all, including underserved population and households.”

BTS is the principal federal statistical agency that tells us how, how sustainably, and how safely people and commodities move within the United States and across our borders. BTS also tells us how transportation contributes and enables the nation's economy. Its key products include statistics on freight, economic trends, spatial accessibility and availability of transportation services, airline performance, and precursor accident and safety data. At the onset of the pandemic, BTS developed rapid indicators to track how COVID-19 impacts transportation services and travel patterns. To address supply chain disruption, BTS, in collaboration with five other departments, compile supply chain indicators to inform policies and decisions.

2. Funding “Infrastructure Investment & Jobs Act” ([IIJA](#)) BTS components: \$10 million

- **Economic Competitiveness Effects of Transportation System (\$3 million):** IIJA Section 25004 requires the BTS to expand its reporting to include employment in the transportation sector and the effects of the transportation system on global and domestic economic competitiveness. This will

require BTS develop and implement a plan to collect data on such topics as R&D investment levels by government and industry, technology deployment, capacity of US transportation to reach foreign markets, international market penetration of US transportation technology, and related factors. These data will provide inputs to the DOT learning agenda as required by the Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act of 2018.

- **Federal support for local decisionmaking (\$5 million):** IIJA Section 25003 specifies the following:

“To determine the data analysis tools needed to assist local communities in making infrastructure decisions, the Director of the [BTS] shall perform outreach to planning and infrastructure decisionmaking officials in units of local government and other units of government...”

This program is intended to help state, local, and tribal government units address such issues as,

- Improving access to jobs, affordable housing, schools, medical services, and foods;
- Creating economic development through infrastructure development;
- Enabling supply chains to connect the community to labor, resources, and markets; and
- Improving community resilience to extreme weather events.

To executive this provision, BTS needs resources to build on its extensive experience with new forms of data that provide timely statistics with extensive geographic detail, such as the daily travel data that BTS currently publishes for each county based on location service devices.

- **Freight and Supply Chain Benchmark Statistics Series (\$2 million).** To support Title 1 Subtitle A, Multimodal Freight Policy IIJA Sections, BTS will expand its freight data programs to produce benchmark statistics on freight and supply chains on a periodic and timely basis. The statistics will include the geographic extent and diversity of existing supply chains for key industries, resiliency of existing supply chains, freight movement costs, and measurements assessing transportation bottlenecks. This project also supports the DOT components of the Administration’s February 2021 [Executive Order 14017 on American’s Supply Chains](#).

Challenges

BTS has lost 40% of its purchasing power since 2003, which hampers its ability to meet critical missions, maintain ongoing programs, address emerging, critical issues, and conduct research to generate new evidence. One impact has been the discontinuation of fundamental and benchmark data programs, forcing decisions to be made based on decades old data. The agency faces a serious shortage of full-time equivalent staff (FTE) allotment to maintain internal capacity and to keep pace with advancements in statistical science, limiting BTS ability to leverage big data and be innovative.

