

U.S. Sen. Baldwin: Calls for \$32 billion in transit funding in next COVID-19 stimulus package

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WASHINGTON, D.C. – U.S. Senator Tammy Baldwin joined two dozen of her colleagues, led by Senator Bob Menendez (D-NJ), in urging Senate leadership to provide an additional \$32 billion in emergency supplemental funding for public transit agencies in the next COVID-19 stimulus package. Transit agencies have been hit hard ever since stay-at-home orders were first announced in states across the country back in March, resulting in plummeting ridership and fare revenues needed to keep trains and buses running safely and on time.

“Through the depths of the current crisis, public transportation agencies have continued operating to ensure that essential workers and others can do their jobs and get back to their families at the end of each shift,” **the lawmakers wrote in a letter to the Senate’s Majority and Minority Leaders Mitch McConnell (R-KY) and Chuck Schumer (D-NY).** “These operations have enabled our economy to stay alive, but they have come with massive increases in costs while revenues have fallen.”

The bipartisan CARES Act that passed earlier this year included \$24 billion in transit relief, but the lawmakers warned that without additional assistance, public transit agencies will exhaust those funds before the year’s end.

“Now, as the public health crisis has necessitated the continuation of stay-at-home orders for months in states across the country, we must recognize the true costs of the coronavirus on our transit systems,” **the letter continued.** “Decreased farebox revenue has continued longer than we anticipated two months ago, and the reduction in other revenue sources such as local sales taxes are deeper than

anyone predicted. Many transit agencies, particularly those hardest hit by the pandemic, will exhaust their CARES Act funds before the end of the year.”

The lawmakers’ request falls in line with the request made by transit agency officials at some of the largest transit systems in the country. Representatives from those agencies and several labor unions, outlined their need for additional federal assistance back in May to help them recover, implement new health and safety procedures and resume full service.

In addition to Baldwin and Menendez, Senators Kamala Harris (D-CA), Richard Blumenthal (D-CT), Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI), Dianne Feinstein (D-CA), Ed Markey (D-MA), Bob Casey (D-PA), Jeff Merkley (D-OR), Mazie Hirono (D-HI), Ron Wyden (D-OR), Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY), Amy Klobuchar (D-MN), Bernie Sanders (I-VT), Chris Van Hollen (D-MD), Tim Kaine (D-VA), Cory Booker (D-NJ), Brian Schatz (D-HI), Tammy Duckworth (D-IL), Dick Durbin (D-IL), Elizabeth Warren (D-MA), Ben Cardin (D-MD), Sherrod Brown (D-OH), Gary Peters (D-MI) and Tina Smith (D-MN) also signed today’s letter.

A copy of the letter can be found [here](#) and below.

Dear Leader McConnell and Leader Schumer:

As you continue negotiations on further actions to respond to the ongoing coronavirus pandemic, we write to strongly urge you to include significant financial support for public transit in any final agreement. Safe and healthy buses, subways, and trains are absolutely vital for health care workers, law enforcement, first responder, and other safety personnel working on the front lines of the pandemic, and will be essential to a full economic recovery in the months and years ahead. For those reasons, we must ensure that our transit systems are fully operational going forward by providing an additional \$32 billion in emergency supplemental funding for public transportation through the end of 2021.

Public transit enables our economy. In addition to the 435,000 workers directly employed by transit agencies and the hundreds of thousands of manufacturing, rail supply, construction, maintenance, and design and engineering jobs dependent on the industry, millions of other activities are enabled by transit – either for getting to and from work or by the economic multiplier effects transit creates. Through the depths of the current crisis, public transportation agencies have continued operating to ensure that essential workers and others can do their jobs and get

back to their families at the end of each shift. These operations have enabled our economy to stay alive, but they have come with massive increases in costs while revenues have fallen.

In the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act), we took decisive action to support our transit systems by providing \$25 billion in immediate support. This funding came at a time when we expected the crisis to be relatively short and accompanied by a steep, immediate recovery. Now, as the public health crisis has necessitated the continuation of stay-at-home orders for months in states across the country, we must recognize the true costs of the coronavirus on our transit systems. Decreased farebox revenue has continued longer than we anticipated two months ago, and the reduction in other revenue sources such as local sales taxes are deeper than anyone predicted. Many transit agencies, particularly those hardest hit by the pandemic, will exhaust their CARES Act funds before the end of the year.

Given these facts, we must act swiftly to preserve public transit options for Americans and keep our systems safe and healthy. This is an unprecedented time in our history and it requires strong, demonstrated leadership from this body, as well. We support an additional \$32 billion in emergency aid to transit systems through the end of 2021 not only to keep these systems operational, but also to signal to our constituents that we will be ready for the economic recovery we are all working towards.

Sincerely,

An online version of this release is available [here](#).