

Sens. Baldwin, Ernst: Introduce Bipartisan Legislation to Improve Transportation Access for Workers and Families

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Bipartisan reform expands resources to help solve mobility challenges and boost economic opportunity

WASHINGTON, D.C. – U.S. Senators Tammy Baldwin (D-WI) and Joni Ernst (R-IA) today introduced bipartisan legislation to improve transportation access and help break down barriers for workers and families getting to jobs, local businesses and health care services. The *Connecting Opportunities through Mobility Metrics and Unlocking Transportation Efficiencies (COMMUTE) Act* provides data to states and local governments to measure accessibility to local businesses and important destinations, and inform investments in transportation systems.

“Across the country, inadequate or unaffordable transportation options can be a significant barrier to employment and hold potential workers back from economic opportunity. Individuals without cars—including low-income workers, seniors and people with disabilities—are oftentimes isolated from areas experiencing job growth and other destinations important to daily life. These destinations include not only jobs, but also school and workforce training, medical facilities, grocery stores, childcare and affordable housing,” **said Senator Baldwin.** “At the same time, employers, particularly those located just outside metro areas and in rural communities, may be missing out on potential workers. Even while businesses create jobs, insufficient transportation options for workers create a barrier to

equitable economic growth. This bipartisan legislation is about investing in more efficient transportation so workers and families are better connected to what they need.”

“Iowans across our state, especially in rural areas, depend on transportation to support their everyday life. In order for local leaders to effectively address mobility challenges and support economic growth in their communities, having access to data is key,” **said Senator Ernst**. “That’s why I support this bipartisan bill that would equip states and local governments with the data they need to effectively plan investments in transportation infrastructure so we can keep our communities connected and our economy moving.”

States and local communities face challenging decisions about how to best allocate transportation resources to connect employers with workers, while also improving access to daily errands and public services. Information about where jobs and other important destinations are located, and where transportation access can be made more convenient, can better inform locally-driven decisions about how to most effectively invest transportation resources and design with access in mind. To that end, data tools can help inform transportation planning decisions about improved access to opportunity for residents—particularly for individuals dependent on transit, communities of color, low-income communities and vulnerable road users. These new tools allow states and transportation planners to measure changes in access, evaluate how transportation dollars are spent, and set targets. Accessibility data also encourages effective coordination between transportation investments and economic development.

The *COMMUTE Act* requires the Department of Transportation to provide states, metropolitan planning organizations and rural planning organizations with data sets measuring the level of access by multiple transportation modes to important destinations. Those destinations include jobs and areas with a concentration of available jobs, health care facilities, childcare services, educational and workforce training facilities, affordable housing and food sources, as well as connections to transit or rail service, bike routes and sidewalks. DOT will select eligible states, metropolitan planning organizations and rural planning organizations to participate in the program on a competitive basis. Data will also be made available to local governments and researchers.

The bill is supported by Transportation for America, Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations, National Association of Regional Councils, Coalition for Smarter Transportation, New Urban Mobility Alliance, and League of American Bicyclists.

The full bill text is available [here](#).

More information on the legislation is available [here](#).

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