

117TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 2287

To direct the Secretary of Transportation to carry out a grant program to support efforts to provide fare-free transit service, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

MARCH 29, 2021

Ms. PRESSLEY introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure

A BILL

To direct the Secretary of Transportation to carry out a grant program to support efforts to provide fare-free transit service, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Freedom to Move Act”.

5 **SEC. 2. PURPOSE.**

6 The purposes of this Act are—

7 (1) to invest in State, county, and local municipi-
8 talities efforts to provide fare-free public transpor-
9 tation; and

1 (2) to support State, county, and local municipi-
2 palities in improving and expanding access to safe,
3 accessible, and reliable mass transit systems in order
4 to improve the livability of communities.

5 **SEC. 3. FINDINGS.**

6 Congress finds the following:

7 (1) Increasing access to safe, reliable, and af-
8 fordable public transit systems, including buses,
9 light rail, and subways can help increase community
10 livability and mobility to critical services such as
11 education, jobs, and healthcare.

12 (2) The cost of transit fares can act as a chal-
13 lenging economic barrier for low-income individuals
14 and families who are most likely to rely on public
15 transportation to access critical services and must
16 spend larger parts of their household budget on
17 transportation services. Removing economic barriers
18 to safe, reliable, and affordable public transit, can
19 help to increase social and economic mobility by in-
20 creasing access to education, training, and employ-
21 ment.

22 (3) Individuals with disabilities are twice as
23 likely as those without disabilities to have inadequate
24 access to safe, affordable, and reliable transpor-
25 tation. Reports have found that of the nearly 2 mil-

1 lion people with disabilities who are unable to leave
2 their homes, nearly 30 percent is due to lack of ade-
3 quate transportation.

4 (4) As the senior population continues to grow,
5 an increasing number of elderly adults depend on
6 public transit to access medical care and other vital
7 services. Additionally, the percentage of 13 to 34-
8 year-olds without a driver's license continues to
9 grow. Taken together, these trends show the unprec-
10 edented urgency of investing in and improving our
11 public transit systems.

12 (5) According to the Department of Transpor-
13 tation, transportation accounts for 29 percent of
14 greenhouse gas emissions in the United States. Pub-
15 lic transportation, however, produces significantly
16 lower greenhouse gas emissions per passenger mile
17 than by private vehicles. Increasing public transit
18 ridership and moving more people to and from crit-
19 ical services with fewer vehicles on the road can re-
20 duce greenhouse gas emissions.

21 (6) Eliminating transit fares and significantly
22 reducing economic barriers to public transit will help
23 to reduce the need for fare evasion policies that dis-
24 proportionately criminalize low-income individuals
25 and people of color.

1 **SEC. 4. GRANTS TO SUPPORT FARE-FREE TRANSIT.**

2 (a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 360 days after the
3 date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall award
4 grants (which shall be known as “Freedom to Move
5 Grants”) to eligible entities, on a competitive basis, to
6 cover the lost fare revenue for fare-free public transpor-
7 tation and improve public transportation.

8 (b) APPLICATION.—To be eligible to receive a grant
9 under this section, an eligible entity shall submit to the
10 Secretary an application at such time, in such manner,
11 and containing such information as the Secretary may re-
12 quire, including, at a minimum, the following:

13 (1) A description of how the eligible entity
14 plans to implement fare free transit access.

15 (2) A description of how the entity will work to
16 expand and improve bus service, which may in-
17 clude—

18 (A) a bus network redesign;

19 (B) how such redesign will prioritize con-
20 sistent and reliable service for low-income and
21 historically underserved communities;

22 (C) how such redesign will prioritize
23 connectivity to critical services and improve
24 community livability; and

25 (D) how the eligible entity will meaning-
26 fully consult with community, community lead-

1 ers, local stakeholders and advocates, including
2 transit advocates and disability advocates, local
3 education agencies and institutions of higher
4 education, community developers, labor unions,
5 public housing agencies and workforce develop-
6 ment boards, while facilitating such redesign.

7 (3) A description of how the eligible entity will
8 meaningfully partner and collaborate with commu-
9 nity, community leaders, local stakeholders and ad-
10 vocates, including transit advocates and disability
11 advocates, local education agencies and institutions
12 of higher education, community developers, labor
13 unions, public housing agencies and workforce devel-
14 opment boards to support outreach efforts to in-
15 crease awareness of fare-free bus and transit pro-
16 grams.

17 (4) A description of the eligible entity's equity
18 evaluation examining any transit and mobility gaps
19 within the current transit system and how the eligi-
20 ble entity plans to significantly improve these gaps,
21 including—

22 (A) the average commute times for driver
23 commuters and non-driver commuters;

24 (B) public transit ridership rates disaggre-
25 gated by mode of transportation and demo-

1 graphic group (youth (including youth involved
2 in the foster care system), seniors, individuals
3 with disabilities, and low-income status); and

4 (C) average length of bus routes and aver-
5 age delay times.

6 (5) A description of the eligible entity's current
7 fare evasion enforcement policies, including—

8 (A) the cost of the fine and whether the in-
9 fraction is considered a civil offense or a crimi-
10 nal offense punishable by imprisonment;

11 (B) the number of individuals charged with
12 violating a fare evasion policy, disaggregated by
13 age, race, gender, and disability status; and

14 (C) how the eligible entity plans to elimi-
15 nate fare evasion policies and end the criminal-
16 ization of individuals evading fares.

17 (6) An estimate of additional costs as a result
18 of increased ridership, including—

19 (A) fuel;

20 (B) personnel;

21 (C) maintenance; and

22 (D) other operational costs.

23 (7) Information and statistics on assaults on
24 transit employees and a description of trainings and

1 policies to protect employees, which may include de-
2 escalation training.

3 (c) DURATION.—Grants awarded under this section
4 shall be for a 5-year period.

5 (d) SELECTION OF ELIGIBLE ENTITIES.—In car-
6 rying out the program under this section, the Secretary
7 shall award grants to eligible entities located in both rural
8 and urbanized areas.

9 (e) USES OF FUNDS.—An eligible entity that receives
10 a grant under this section shall use such grant to sup-
11 port—

12 (1) implementing a fare-free transit program;

13 and

14 (2) efforts to improve public transportation,
15 particularly in underserved communities, including
16 costs associated with efforts to provide more safe,
17 frequent, and reliable bus service, including—

18 (A) bus stop safety and accessibility im-
19 provements;

20 (B) pedestrian and bike shelters;

21 (C) signage;

22 (D) painted bus lanes;

23 (E) signal priority systems;

24 (F) street redesign;

1 (G) operational costs to meet demands of
2 increased ridership, including hiring and train-
3 ing of personnel; and

4 (H) conducting a bus network redesign.

5 (f) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

6 (1) ELIGIBLE ENTITIES.—In this section, the
7 term “eligible entity” means—

8 (A) a State, county, local municipality;

9 (B) a transit agency;

10 (C) a private nonprofit organization en-
11 gaged in public transportation in rural areas; or

12 (D) a partnership between entities de-
13 scribed in subparagraphs (A) through (D).

14 (2) UNDERSERVED COMMUNITY.—The term
15 “underserved community” means—

16 (A) a community not served by existing
17 bus routes or infrequent service; and

18 (B) a community located in an area within
19 a census tract that is identified as—

20 (i) a low-income community; and

21 (ii) a community of color.

22 (3) LOW-INCOME INDIVIDUALS.—The term
23 “low-income individuals” means an individual whose
24 family income is at or below 150 percent of the pov-
25 erty line (as that term is defined in section 673(2))

1 of the Community Service Block Grant Act (42
2 U.S.C. 9902(2)), including any revision required by
3 that section) for a family of the size involved.

4 (4) FOSTER CARE YOUTH.—The term “foster
5 care youth”—

6 (A) means children and youth whose care
7 and placement are the responsibility of the
8 State or Tribal agency that administers a State
9 or Tribal plan under part B or E of title IV of
10 the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 621 et seq.
11 and 670 et seq.), without regard to whether fos-
12 ter care maintenance payments are made under
13 section 472 of such Act (42 U.S.C. 672) on be-
14 half of such children and youth; and

15 (B) includes individuals who were age 13
16 or older when their care and placement were
17 the responsibility of a State or Tribal agency
18 that administered a State or Tribal plan under
19 part B or E of title IV of the Social Security
20 Act (42 U.S.C. 621 et seq. and 670 et seq.)
21 and who are no longer under the care and re-
22 sponsibility of such a State or Tribal agency,
23 without regard to any such individual’s subse-
24 quent adoption, guardianship arrangement, or
25 other form of permanency outcome.

1 (5) PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION.—The term
2 “public transportation”—

3 (A) means regular, continuing shared-ride
4 surface transportation services that are open to
5 the general public or open to a segment of the
6 general public defined by age, disability, or low
7 income; and

8 (B) does not include—

9 (i) intercity passenger rail transpor-
10 tation provided by the entity described in
11 chapter 243 of title 49, United States
12 Code, (or a successor to such entity);

13 (ii) intercity bus service;

14 (iii) charter bus service;

15 (iv) school bus service;

16 (v) sightseeing service;

17 (vi) courtesy shuttle service for pa-
18 trons of one or more specific establish-
19 ments; or

20 (vii) intra-terminal or intra-facility
21 shuttle services.

22 (g) REPORT.—

23 (1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 3 years after
24 the date on which funds are made available to carry
25 out this section, the Secretary shall collect data from

1 eligible entities receiving a grant under this section
2 on the progress of meeting the targets described in
3 the application of such entity.

4 (2) REQUIREMENTS.—The report required
5 under paragraph (1) shall—

6 (A) collect data on demographics of com-
7 munities served under this Act, disaggregated
8 and cross-tabulated by—

9 (i) race

10 (ii) ethnicity;

11 (iii) sex; and

12 (iv) household median income; and

13 (B) progress towards significantly closing
14 transit equity gaps as described in subsection
15 (b)(4).

16 (h) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There is
17 authorized to be appropriated to carry out this section
18 \$5,000,000,000 for each of fiscal years 2022 through
19 2026.

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