

Mary Louise Burke

Secretary Pete Buttigieg
United States Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary Buttigieg:

I am writing to express my strong support for Hampton Roads Transit's (HRT), Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability & Equity (RAISE) \$25 million grant application for the construction of the new, state-of-the-art, net-zero ready, Southside Bus Operating Division Facility and the agency transition to a fully zero emissions fleet. The facility will provide the necessary maintenance and operations support spaces to allow HRT to greatly expand its service through the new Regional Transit System (RTS).

The RTS program includes a 13-route regional backbone bus service that connects the six cities HRT serves with 15-minute service frequencies and increases service to approximately 487,000 citizens. This grant will support this critical component of HRT's expanding service and will meet both HRT's and USDOT's goals of moving towards a green-energy future. The new Southside Maintenance Facility will replace aging, inefficient infrastructure, reduce operating costs, and provide opportunities for more jobs in the region. The new facility will be built to support a 100% electric fleet and will have the ability to use alternative energy sources such as electricity generated from offshore wind farms, geothermal heating, and on-site solar panels.

HRT is vital to the economy of Hampton Roads. HRT provides transit service to six of Virginia's ten most populous cities. In addition to 73 bus routes, the agency provides ferry, paratransit, seasonal trolleys, and transportation demand management services. HRT is also home to Virginia's only light rail system. HRT carries approximately 600,000 trips per month across the region on all of its services. The New Southside Bus Operating Facility supported by this RAISE grant application will enable HRT to continue to meet its goal of connecting Hampton Roads with transportation solutions that are reliable, safe, efficient, and sustainable.

I am a retiree and environmentalist residing in Chesapeake, Virginia, in the Southside region under consideration for this grant. I neither own nor desire a car. I generally either ride my bicycle or ride Hampton Roads Transit to get where I need to go. Our region desperately needs the RTS based on my experiences. For example, to ride Bus 13 from Chesapeake to the MacArthur Center in Norfolk last Wednesday for a music lesson took over an hour and a half. By car this would have been about 20 minutes. Yesterday, I rode by bus to the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts in Virginia Beach and back. Travel time took me about six hours round trip, negatively affecting the time I could spend in the museum itself and surrounding area. By car, depending on traffic, this trip would have been as little as 25 minutes each way. As it was, I got home after dark and barely local Chesapeake buses stopped running around 7 PM. An improved regional system with inter-city buses departing every fifteen minutes would make these types of routes more timely and efficient, improve riders' experiences, and increase ridership.

I ran for Chesapeake City Council in May of 2018. One of the most consistent complaints at public forums across the city was congestion on our highways and bridges. Increased transit ridership through RTS will reduce congestion and the emission of greenhouse gasses. A

zero-emission fleet will also make riders' experiences less noisy and more environmentally-friendly. Please approve this grant to help HRT make all this happen.

Thank you for your consideration of the Hampton Roads Transit RAISE application.

Sincerely,

Mary Louise Burke