

January 29, 2018

Honorable Elaine Chao  
Office of The Secretary  
U.S. Department of Transportation  
1200 New Jersey Ave. SE.,  
Washington, DC 20590  
(DELIVERED VIA EMAIL)

Dear Secretary Chao:

We, the undersigned organizations, write you to express our deep concerns with the U.S. Department of Transportation's (USDOT) action to eliminate the Federal [Advisory Committee on Transportation Equity](#) (ACTE) and to urge a reversal of the action.

We are members and allies of the [Transportation Equity Caucus](#), which is comprised of the nation's leading civil rights, community development, disability, racial justice, economic justice, faith-based, health, housing, labor, environmental justice, tribal, public interest, women's groups and transportation organizations. Together, we drive transportation policies that advance racial and economic equity in America.

We were pleased when the USDOT established the ACTE in 2016 (in accordance with the provisions of the Federal Advisory Committee Act) and charged it to provide the Secretary of Transportation with "independent advice and recommendations about comprehensive, interdisciplinary issues related to transportation equity." ACTE members are highly-respected leaders involved in transportation planning, design, research, policy, and advocacy.

Our nation's history of inequitable transportation and development investments has resulted in gross inequities in the accessibility, affordability, availability, and safety of transportation options in different communities. The effects are well-documented:

- Nearly two-thirds of rural community residents have limited transportation options.
- Nearly one in five Americans has a disability and relies on accessible transportation infrastructure.
- Nearly 20 percent of African American households, 13 percent of Asian American households, and 14 percent of Latino households have no access to a vehicle, compared to 5 percent of white households.
- Fifteen percent of Native Americans must travel more than 100 miles to access basic services.
- Pedestrian fatality rates in low-income neighborhoods are more than twice the pedestrian fatality rates in high-income neighborhoods.
- Three-quarters of low- and middle-skill jobs cannot be accessed by a one-way, 90-minute transit commute.
- Households in the bottom 90 percent income bracket spend two times the amount on transportation that households in the top 10 percent income bracket spend each year.
- While one in 10 civilian jobs is transportation-related—women, communities of color, low-income people, and people with disabilities lack access to jobs and contracting opportunities in the industry.

It is vital for our communities and our economy that we act to reverse these inequitable outcomes. The ACTE can provide USDOT with invaluable contributions including strategies and policies targeted toward improving safety and access opportunities where they are needed most. It is worth noting that while other advisory committees recently eliminated by USDOT had completed their work, the work of the ACTE had just begun. The ACTE also provides an important venue for the public to give USDOT vital input on its activities related to access, mobility, and opportunity.

Without a group like the ACTE, it is hard to imagine how USDOT will gain the information it needs to ensure that its investments in transportation will be equitable. The elimination of the local hire pilot and backing away from the Ladders of Opportunity framing represent USDOT actions that are not in keeping with the principles of equity. Moreover, it is unclear how USDOT's future-looking initiatives (i.e. infrastructure legislation, surface transportation reauthorization, automated vehicle policy, public-private partnerships, on-demand transportation mobility projects, etc.) will benefit communities that have been cut off from opportunity by inequitable federal investments of the recent past. The ACTE provides a convenient and low-cost way for USDOT to access expertise of the top equity experts in the country to advise on these activities. Without the engagement of experts in equity, we run the risk of building new infrastructure and mobility options that fail to connect all people to opportunity.

Therefore, we urge the USDOT to immediately reinstate the ACTE and activate this body as a critical resource for efforts to advance opportunity and inclusion through federal transportation policy and investment. In addition, we would like to discuss this matter in person and will contact your office to request a meeting. You may also contact the co-chair of Transportation Equity Caucus, Anita Cozart, 202-846-1396 or [anita@policylink.org](mailto:anita@policylink.org).

Sincerely,

1000 Friends of Wisconsin  
All Walks DC  
Alliance for Metropolitan Stability  
America Walks  
American Association on Health and Disability  
American Public Health Association  
Americans for Transit  
Association of Programs for Rural Independent Living  
Capital Region (Wisconsin) Advocacy Network for Environmental Sustainability  
Conference of Minority Transportation Officials (COMTO)  
Disability Rights Education & Defense Fund  
Enterprise Community Partners  
ESTHER-Fox Valley, Neenah, WI  
Equiticity  
Heartland Alliance  
Jobs to Move America  
Kheprw Institute  
Lakeshore Foundation

Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights  
League of American Bicyclists  
League of Women Voters of Wisconsin  
Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy  
Madison Area Bus Advocates  
Madison ProRail  
National Alliance of Community Economic Development Associations  
National Coalition for Asian Pacific American Community Development (CAPACD)  
National Congress of American Indians  
National Disability Rights Network  
National Recreation and Park Association  
Natural Resources Defense Council  
Partnership for Working Families  
Philadelphia Unemployment Project  
PolicyLink  
Public Advocates Inc.  
Rails-to-Trails Conservancy  
Safe Routes to School National Partnership  
Sierra Club  
Slow Roll Chicago  
Transportation for America  
Vision Zero Network