



August 26, 2020

The Honorable Mark Meadows
Chief of Staff
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. Meadows:

On behalf of the undersigned organizations, representing multiple industries critical to the U.S. national transportation network, we seek the Administration's support for including the Coronavirus Economic Relief for Transportation Services Act (CERTS Act), in the next economic relief package under discussion between the Administration and Congress. The CERTS Act is bi-partisan legislation, introduced in both the Senate and House, and led by Senator Susan Collins and Representative Darin LaHood, respectively. Both bills provide much needed grant and economic assistance to private transportation industries overlooked in previously enacted coronavirus economic relief packages. With Congress and the Administration focused on those sectors of the economy that continue to struggle from the pandemic, this legislation explicitly meets this goal and we seek your support.

The U.S. private motorcoach, school bus and domestic passenger vessel industries have suffered unprecedented economic losses and furloughed hundreds of thousands of employees over the past 6 months due to the coronavirus pandemic. Based on the nature of their operations, many of these businesses will not see significant returns to "normal" business operations until 2021, at the earliest, and their employees will remain out of work.

Unlike airlines, rail and public transits, which are publicly supported and/or received significant stimulus support, our industries have not received specific federal economic relief to date, placing them in a perilous position while a number of companies have already permanently closed. While our industries appreciate the aid provided through such programs as the Paycheck Protection Program, these programs have proved inadequate to address the long-term capital investment burdens and costly regulatory burdens associated with the passenger transportation industry, particularly at a time when there is no sign of recovery for passenger travel. If this trend continues and these businesses do not receive a lifeline to bridge this crisis, the capacity of the national transportation network will not only contract but there will also be increased demand for less cost-efficient publicly subsidized transportation to address the loss. Right now, the private sector plays a critical role in meeting public transportation needs, without the burden of requiring federal, state or local government subsidies.

The U.S. private motorcoach, school bus and domestic passenger vessel industries, collectively, employ over 400,000 employees and provide diverse and essential passenger transportation services nationwide.

The U.S. motorcoach industry employs nearly 100,000 individuals and provides nearly 600 million passenger trips per year ensuring vital intercity connections for rural communities, relieving congestion and providing reliable commuter operations for urban areas, and serving as a necessary component of the nation's emergency response capability. Motorcoaches provide affordable public transportation to connect people to jobs and schools, critical services, and to other modes of transportation as part of the larger transportation network. Charter and tour operations are an essential part of the travel and tourism industry and will be essential to help those businesses as the nation recovers from the pandemic. Motorcoaches are also a key element of our nation's defense system and support military troop movements; and take people out of harm's way by supplying evacuation services and moving emergency response personnel into place during hurricanes, fires, and other national emergencies.

Private school bus transportation companies provide nearly 40% of the nation's school bus service under contract to school districts, employing over 250,000 employees. School bus transportation is the safest form of transportation for students to get to and from school according to DOT statistics. School bus companies have been severely impacted by the pandemic as they have experienced reduced or no payments due to school closures in the spring, cancellation of summer camps and activities and wide variations across the country regarding school re-openings, activity trips and sports activities this fall. Many districts that are not reopening schools for classroom learning on a full-time basis are refusing to pay contractors, yet expecting them to be ready to resume full operations with licensed and eligible drivers with less than a week's notice. In other cases, districts still owe contractors money for operations dating back to the spring, also expecting contractors to maintain staffing levels and vehicles. School bus transportation is an extension of the education system and for many, the only way to get to and from school. For 26 million children, their trained and skilled professional school bus driver is the first and last person they see during their school day. It is critical to ensure the continued viability of school bus transportation for these children that rely on the yellow school bus.

The U.S. passenger vessel industry, which in good times carries more than 200 million passengers annually has been literally shut down as a result of the coronavirus pandemic. The passenger vessel industry includes public and private ferries, dinner boats, sightseeing and excursion vessels, whale watch and wildlife tour boats, sailing vessels, and small U.S. overnight cruise ships. These small businesses, which are in virtually every port in our Nation, employ thousands of U.S. citizens and U.S. mariners make a significant contribution to the transportation and travel and tourism sectors.

These transportation industries all provide vital transportation services, playing an essential role in the national transportation network without burdening government coffers. If these private industries fail, the effect will be devastating and reverberate throughout the entire economy. The impact will affect not only the capacity of the national transportation network, but also schools, national emergency response capabilities, the manufacturing sector, the financial sector, the tourism sector and beyond. As well, with the demise of the private sector, there will be an even greater demand to further expand costly, publicly subsidized transportation options. For these various reasons, an investment in bridging these industries through this crisis now, will provide a more long-term stable outcome for the economy and the federal budget.

Please support inclusion of the CERTS Act in the next coronavirus relief package. Time is running out for these industries. If we can provide any additional information to assist with this request, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely,

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