



July 9, 2024

The Honorable Tom Cole
Chair
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Steve Womack
Chair
Subcomm. on Transp., HUD, *et al.*
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairs Cole and Womack,

I write on behalf of the Natural Resources Defense Council (“NRDC”), a national, non-profit environmental organization with more than three million members and activists, along with an array of lawyers, scientists, and other environmental specialists who have worked since 1970 to protect the world’s natural resources, public health, and environment. We oppose in the strongest terms the House’s bill making appropriations for the Departments of Transportation, and Housing and Urban Development, and related agencies (“THUD”) for fiscal year 2025 (“FY25”), which is set to be marked up by the Appropriations Committee tomorrow.¹

There is a long, grand tradition of THUD bills keeping our country and economy running smoothly by providing the necessary resources for our transportation systems, from rails to roads, to serve the needs of all communities. Thus, we are confounded by the fact that the House majority has produced a measure that does precisely the opposite. *First*, it is marred by a bewildering **4.3 percent reduction² in topline funding** from FY24, including an egregious **cut of 66% to Capital Investment Grants³**, which are crucially important for expanding access to high-quality public transportation across the country. Making matters worse, the bill **nixes funding for the Thriving Communities Program** in its entirety, thereby decimating an initiative to help disadvantaged, rural, and tribal areas develop and deliver transformational transportation and community revitalization projects.⁴ Indeed, Chair Womack: you need not travel far to see the benefits this program brings. Just this year, Arkansas’ Frontier Metropolitan Planning Organization received assistance help connect rural areas of Fort Smith, Arkansas with its city center.⁵ Unfortunately, the House’s THUD bill would put important work like this at risk.

¹ H. COMM. ON APPROPRIATIONS, 118TH CONG., MAKING APPROPRIATIONS FOR THE DEPARTMENTS OF TRANSPORTATION, AND HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT, AND RELATED AGENCIES FOR THE FISCAL YEAR ENDING SEPTEMBER 30, 2025, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES (Comm. Print, as reported by H. Subcomm. on Transp., HUD, *et al.*, June 27, 2024) (hereinafter “House THUD Bill”).

² After accounting for housing revenues.

³ *See id.* at 67:6 –68:24.

⁴ *See generally* THRIVING COMMUNITIES PROGRAM, U.S. DEP’T OF TRANSP., <https://www.transportation.gov/grants/thriving-communities> (last visited July 9, 2024) (detailing the Thriving Communities Program’s positive outcomes).

⁵ *See* U.S. DEP’T OF TRANSP., FY 2023 THRIVING COMMUNITIES PROGRAM (TCP) – SELECTED COMMUNITY PROFILES, at 7 (Apr. 2024), *available at* https://www.transportation.gov/sites/dot.gov/files/2024-04/FY%2023%20TCP_Selected%20Communities%20Fact%20Sheet_v2.pdf.

Second, the House’s THUD offering perpetuates the Committee majority’s obsession with atrocious policy riders, and in this case their cause célèbre appears to be increased air pollution. These riders include breathtaking **restrictions on funding for** the implementation of:

- (i) the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration’s **corporate average fuel economy (or “CAFE”) standards**, which estimates say will keep 710 million metric tons of climate pollution out of the air through 2050;⁶
- (ii) the Department of Transportation’s **greenhouse gas (“GHG”) performance measure rule**, which instructs states to set targets to reduce their GHG impacts on transportation investments;⁷ and
- (iii) New York City’s **congestion pricing**, thereby preventing a massive infusion of new funds to support the nation’s largest transit system.⁸

Third, and finally, the bill carries on the majority’s unending culture war, **assailing initiatives to ensure diversity, equity, inclusion**, and even the implementation of **Justice40**,⁹ an “historic effort to ensure that Federal climate, clean energy, and infrastructure investments reach the communities who need them most.”¹⁰ It is profoundly discouraging to see such base messaging fodder deface the work product of a committee that once was considered a model of effective legislating and bipartisanship.

This THUD bill, in its present form, is yet another in a long line of failures put out by a majority that seems more interested in indulging its worst instincts than in making law. The nation deserves a measure that has seen due deliberation, coherent thought, and outreach across the aisle to keep its people housed, its roads safe, and its trains running on time.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Kyle T. Jones
Director, Federal Affairs

cc: The Hon. Rosa DeLauro, Committee on Appropriations, Ranking Member;
The Hon. Mike Quigley, Subcomm. on Transp., HUD, *et al.*, Ranking Member

⁶ House THUD Bill, *supra* note 1, § 193. *See also* Press Release, NRDC, Fuel Economy Standards Save Drivers at the Pump (July 28, 2023), <https://www.nrdc.org/press-releases/nrdc-fuel-economy-standards-save-drivers-pump> (“These new [CAFE] standards will ensure that drivers of gasoline vehicles can go further on a tank of gas, saving them money at the pump.”).

⁷ House THUD Bill, *supra* note 1, § 126. *See generally* Shruti Vaidyanathan, *States Will Begin Tracking Transportation Emissions*, NRDC EXPERT BLOG (Dec. 5, 2023), <https://www.nrdc.org/bio/shruti-vaidyanathan/states-will-begin-tracking-transportation-emissions> (setting out the benefits of the GHG performance measure rule).

⁸ House THUD Bill, *supra* note 1, § 125. *See generally* *What Is Congestion Pricing?*, NRDC EXPLAINER (May 25, 2022), <https://www.nrdc.org/stories/what-is-congestion-pricing> (discussing the merits of congestion pricing in New York).

⁹ House THUD Bill, *supra* note 1, § 423 (defunding an array of Federal diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts), 424(3) (stripping money from implementation of the executive order creating Justice40).

¹⁰ Courtney Lindwall, *What Is the Justice40 Initiative?*, NRDC EXPLAINER (Dec. 4, 2023), <https://www.nrdc.org/stories/what-justice40-initiative>.