



Barbara Cline, Senate Banking Committee (March 6, 2014)

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Crapo, and Members of the
Committee:

Thank you for inviting me today to discuss MAP-21
reauthorization and the vital federal role in the future of
community and public transportation.

My name is Barb Cline, and I'm here today representing both the Community Transportation Association of America as its Board President.... And Prairie Hills Transit in Spearfish, South Dakota as its Executive Director.

CTAA is a national nonprofit membership association of transit agencies, officials and advocates, supporting rural, small-urban and specialized operators. Prairie Hills Transit serves a 12,000 square-mile service area and grew from an operation that started with a single van in 1989 to one today comprised of 38 vehicles and 50 employees operating in six South Dakota counties and serving two Native American reservations. We operate out of a full-service, intermodal transportation facility that provides local residents with mobility options and even houses licensed child care.

I appreciate the opportunity to bring the perspective of both CTAA and Prairie Hills Transit to you this morning. We believe that mobility is a basic right for all Americans... one that requires federal investment paired with support from state, county and local governments as well as private-sector partnerships.

Nothing could be more important to the future mobility of rural and small-urban America than Congress reauthorizing surface transportation legislation... on-time and with the resources these communities rely on.

Rural and small urban communities depend on the support of federal programs to a greater degree than their large urban counterparts, as state investment is often inconsistent and local resources are strained. There are no rainy day funds for the majority of rural and small urban transportation providers. The

result of no new legislation will be service cuts, disruptions and fare increases. Passengers will be the hardest hit, arriving to work late — or not at all — and missing life-sustaining medical appointments. The basic independence of many rural residents will be threatened.

Demand for rural and small urban transit is growing — and is why increased investment in Section 5311 and 5307 is vital. In the third quarter of 2013, ridership on transit systems in communities with populations under 100,000 was the fastest growing segment in the transit industry. Ridership in these smaller communities has grown every year for the past five years.

The prime example of the need for federal investment in rural and small-urban transit is in the bus and bus facility capital program.

In my home state of South Dakota, out of 377 total vehicles in service, 358 - more than 95 percent - exceed recommended useful life standards. Half of those have been operating for more than 10 years. At current levels of investment, it would take nearly 20 years to replace all transit vehicles operating past their retirement age. New buses increase system capacity, safety and efficiency and are necessary to meet growing demand.

Health care trips in small and large communities are inundating transit operations. Back home, we partner with local hospitals, veterans clinics, 24-hour care facilities, dialysis centers and more to manage transportation for some of South Dakota's most vulnerable populations. A 40-mile, one-way, life-sustaining dialysis trip or assisting local hospitals with patient discharge, sometimes to another state, is just part of what we do everyday.

I could talk about regulatory reform, mobility management, planning issues and much more... but all of those are covered in the written testimony that we hope will be part of this hearing's official record. Our written testimony also includes an important new report on the impact of chronic illness management on community and public transportation.

In closing, it is an honor to testify before the Senate Banking Committee this morning and I am most grateful for the opportunity. I would be happy to take any questions when that time arrives.