

April 22, 2020

The Honorable Mike Pence  
Vice President of the United States

Dr. Deborah Birx  
Coronavirus Response Coordinator, White House Coronavirus Task Force

Dr. Anthony Fauci  
Director, National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases

Dear Vice President Pence, Dr. Birx, and Dr. Fauci:

Scott Ryan, 41, a bus operator at Community Transit in Snohomish County, Washington, died of coronavirus on March 26.

Patrick Patoir, an MTA worker in New York for 33 years, died of coronavirus on March 30 at the age of 57.

Jory “Jay” Bohanan, a Santa Clarita, California, bus driver, died of coronavirus on March 30.

Jason Hargrove, 50, a Detroit bus operator, died of coronavirus on April 1.

Eugenia Weathers, a school bus driver in Lexington, Kentucky for 17 years, died of coronavirus on April 4.

Michael Hill, a rail conductor in Philadelphia and 30-year SEPTA veteran, died of coronavirus on April 15.

Bus and train operators, maintenance workers, and cleaning staff at transit agencies around the country are risking their lives as they enable essential travel and ensure the continued provision of food, medical care, and other basic goods and services during the COVID-19 pandemic. Many are doing so despite lacking access to adequate personal protective equipment (PPE).

Our organizations urgently request a more coordinated federal response to supply transit workers with necessary protective equipment, as well as stronger guidance from the CDC on how to safely equip transit workers and work environments (see recommendations below).

PPE is critical to the health and safety of the transit workforce. Additionally, protective gear for transit workers will have a strong multiplier effect, since reducing risk will increase the availability of the transit workforce, leading to greater provision of transit service, less crowding on transit vehicles, and lower rates of transmission among transit riders and thus the general population.

Already, transit workers have had to cope with too much death and avoidable exposure to COVID-19. In New York City, transit workers have died at three times the combined rate of the city's police and fire departments.

Without stronger measures in place, the transit workforce will face unacceptable risks, and the overall effort to control the pandemic and minimize the spread of COVID-19 will be weakened.

Even with reduced ridership, bus and train operators face an elevated risk of exposure as they transport essential workers within enclosed vehicles. Better protective gear will reduce these risks and save the lives of transit workers.

With fewer transit workers exposed, agencies will be able to maintain more service hours, reducing crowding on transit vehicles and improving safety for everyone on board.

In addition, maintenance workers and cleaning staff work with surfaces that have high contact rates and potential for exposure. They are also being asked to clean with potent chemicals and need to be protected from any associated long-term health risks.

Some agencies are mobilizing to provide PPE, but the response is inconsistent. Many agencies are not providing any protective face covering, for example. In Philadelphia and Los Angeles, agencies have required all bus operators to use their compartment's transparent protective barrier to isolate them from the space passengers occupy, but other agencies don't have buses equipped with these barriers. Cleaning staff lack the necessary hazard suits, masks, and gloves to work safely with disinfectants that may have long-lasting negative impacts on health.

The CDC issued guidance on April 7 for transit operators, maintenance workers, and station staff, but the recommendations do not fully address the protective needs of these essential workers.

Given the level of exposure faced by transit workers and the cascading effects of failing to protect them, the federal government must act to supply this equipment.

We recognize that supply chain issues affect every industry. However, the need is so urgent, and the consequences of further delay so dire, that action must be taken as soon as possible. We urge the federal government to coordinate with transit agency leaders to provide robust protective equipment to safeguard transit worker health and safety.

Based on our consultation with occupational health and safety experts versed in the transmission of COVID-19, we request the following standard of PPE provision for transit workers.

Bus and train drivers:

- N95 masks for bus and train operators, as well as strong public guidance directing transit riders to wear face masks or coverings, and the provision of face masks at transit stops and stations
- Gloves (with instruction on use and effectiveness)

- Disinfectant wipes
- Hand sanitizer
- Plastic protective barriers to separate operators from passengers
- Safer ventilation on buses, so fresh air continuously flows from the front of the vehicle and out the back, instead of stale air recirculating inside the bus

Cleaning and maintenance staff:

- Hazard suits
- N95 masks, to protect against inhaling harsh chemicals
- Gloves
- Goggles

Depot staff:

- N95 masks
- Gloves
- Hand sanitizer

Thank you for your prompt attention to this urgent matter of public health and safety.

Signed,

TransitCenter  
David Bragdon, Executive Director

Amalgamated Transit Union (TWU)  
John A. Costa, International President

Brotherhood of Railroad Signalmen  
Jerry Boles, President

Community Change  
Dorian T. Warren, President

Center for Popular Democracy  
Brian Kettenring, Co-Executive Director

International Assoc. of Machinists & Aerospace Workers  
Sito Pantoja, Vice President of Transportation

Local Progress  
Sarah Johnson, Executive Director

People's Action

Joy Blackwood, Director of DC Strategy

Sheet Metal, Air, Rail, and Transportation Division (SMART)  
Jeremy Ferguson, President- Transportation Division

Sheet Metal, Air, Rail, and Transportation Division (SMART)  
Joseph Sellers Jr., President - Mechanical Division

Transport Workers Union of America (TWU)  
John Samuelsen, International President

Transportation for America  
Beth Osborne, Director

Transportation Trades Department, AFL-CIO  
Larry I. Willis, President

Union of Concerned Scientists  
Elizabeth Irvin, Senior Transportation Analyst

## **California**

Born And Raised Survivors and Community Developers  
Queen Vanessa, Founder/ President  
San Francisco, CA

Circulate San Diego  
Colin Parent, Executive Director and General Counsel

Climate Action Campaign  
Noah Harris, Transportation Policy Advocate  
San Diego, CA

Investing in Place  
Jessica Meaney, Executive Director  
Los Angeles, CA

San Diego County Bicycle Coalition  
Sylvie Froncek, Programs Director

San Francisco Transit Riders  
Cat Carter, Interim Executive Director

Sea Breeze Properties  
Andy Tenn, Senior Project Manager  
San Diego, CA

TransForm  
Hayley Currier, Policy Advocacy Manager  
Oakland, CA

## **Colorado**

Denver Streets Partnership  
Jill Locantore, Executive Director

Mile High Connects  
Deyanira Zavala, Executive Director  
Denver, CO

## **Florida**

Catalyst Miami  
Gretchen Beesing, CEO

Rural Women's Health Project  
Robin Lewy, Director of Programming  
Gainesville, FL

Tampa Bay Chamber of Commerce  
Nicholas Glover, Vice President, Government Affairs & Advocacy

Transit Alliance Miami  
Azhar Chougale, Executive Director

## **Georgia**

MARTA Army  
Bakari Height, Co-Founder  
Atlanta, GA

Metro Atlanta Chamber of Commerce  
Dave Williams, Senior VP

## **Hawaii**

Blue Planet Foundation  
Lauren Reichelt, Clean Transportation Director  
Honolulu, HI

## **Illinois**

Active Transportation Alliance  
Kyle Whitehead, Managing Director of Public Affairs  
Chicago, IL

Center for Neighborhood Technology  
Robert Dean, CEO  
Chicago, IL

Metropolitan Planning Council  
Audrey Wennink, Director of Transportation  
Chicago, IL

## **Louisiana**

Ride New Orleans  
Alex Posorske, Executive Director

## **Maryland**

Audubon Naturalist Society  
Denisse Guitarra, Maryland Conservation Advocate  
Chevy Chase, MD

Baltimore Transit Equity Coalition  
Samuel Jordan, President

Central Maryland Transportation Alliance  
Brian O'Malley, President & CEO  
Baltimore, MD

Maryland Legislative Coalition  
Cecilia Plante, Co-Chair  
Olney, MD

Prince George's County Department of Public Works & Transportation  
Terry L. Bellamy, Director

Transit Choices  
Robin Budish, Director  
Baltimore, MD

## **Massachusetts**

LivableStreets Alliance  
Stacy Thompson, Executive Director  
Boston, MA

Sierra Club  
Gina Coplon-Newfield, Director-Clean Transportation for All  
Boston, MA

Transportation for Massachusetts  
Chris Dempsey, Director

TransitMatters  
Jarred Johnson, Director  
Boston, MA

## **Michigan**

Transportation Riders United (TRU)  
Megan Owens, Executive Director  
Detroit, MI

## **Minnesota**

East Metro Strong  
William Schroeer, Executive Director  
Saint Paul, MN

Minneapolis Regional Chamber of Commerce  
Jonathan Weinhagen, President & CEO

Move Minnesota  
Sam Rockwell, Executive Director  
Twin Cities, MN

Our Streets Minneapolis  
Ashwat Narayanan, Executive Director  
Minneapolis, MN

## **Missouri**

BikeWalkKC  
Michael Kelley, Policy Manager

Greater Kansas City Chamber of Commerce  
Cathy Bennett, Senior Vice President of Public Policy

**New Jersey**

Regional Plan Association  
Tom Wright, President & CEO

**New York**

Buffalo Transit Riders United  
Simon Husted, Leader

Permanent Citizens Advisory Committee to the MTA (PCAC)  
Lisa Daglian, Executive Director  
New York, NY

Riders Alliance  
Betsy Plum, Executive Director  
New York, NY

Tri-State Transportation Campaign  
Nick Sifuentes, Executive Director  
New York, NY

**North Carolina**

Bike Durham  
John Tallmadge, Executive Director

Local 391 Teamsters  
Marie Hill Faison, Shop Steward  
Durham, NC

SMART 1715 Legislative Representative  
Renee Holzbach, Bus Operator  
Charlotte, NC

Sustain Charlotte  
Shannon Binns, Executive Director

WakeUP Wake County  
Nathan Spencer, Associated Director



## **Ohio**

Case Western Reserve University  
Gwendolyn Donley, Pre-Doctoral Fellow  
Cleveland, OH

Care Alliance Health Center  
Delores Gray, Community Outreach  
Cleveland, OH

City of South Euclid  
Ruth Gray, Councilwoman Ward I

Clevelanders for Public Transit  
Dana Beveridge, Lead Organizer

Cleveland Ward 4  
Deborah Gray

## **Oklahoma**

Oklahoma Transit Association  
Mark C. Nestlen, Executive Director  
Oklahoma City, OK

## **Oregon**

Business for a Better Portland  
Ashley Henry, Executive Director

City of Springfield  
Emma Newman, Senior Transportation Planner  
Springfield, OR

Portland Streetcar  
Steve Fisher, Streetcar Safety and Risk Officer

The Street Trust  
Richa Poudyal, Advocacy Director  
Portland, OR

## **Pennsylvania**

5th Square  
Dena Driscoll, Chair  
Philadelphia, PA

Greater Pittsburgh Chamber of Commerce  
Matt Smith, President

Philly Transit Riders Union  
Nat Lownes, Member

Pittsburghers for Public Transit  
Laura Wiens, Executive Director

Transit Forward Philadelphia  
Yasha Zarrinkelk, Transit Coalition Organizer  
Philadelphia, PA

### **Tennessee**

Music City Riders United  
Ashley Bachelder, Co-Director  
Nashville, TN

Transit Alliance of Middle Tennessee  
Jessica Dauphin, President & CEO  
Nashville, TN

Walk Bike Nashville  
Nora Kern, Executive Director

### **Texas**

LINK Houston  
Oni K. Blair, Executive Director  
Houston, TX

### **Virginia**

MZ Strategies LLC  
Maria Zimmerman, Principal  
Richmond, VA

Rappahannock League for Environmental Protection  
Phil Irwin, Vice President

RVA Rapid Transit  
Ross Catrow, Executive Director  
Richmond, VA

Southern Environmental Law Center  
Trip Pollard, Senior Attorney  
Richmond, VA

Virginia Conservation Network  
Wyatt Gordon, Policy Manager  
Richmond, VA

### **Washington**

Transportation Choices Coalition  
Hester Serebrin, Policy Director  
Seattle, WA

### **Washington, D.C.**

Coalition for Smarter Growth  
Stewart Schwartz, Executive Director  
Washington, D.C.

Greater Greater Washington  
David Alpert, Executive Director  
Washington, DC

### **Wisconsin**

1000 Friends of Wisconsin  
Deborah Nemeth, Executive Director  
Madison, WI