

**Written Testimony of James D. Ogsbury, Executive Director
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**Submitted to the United States Senate
Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies
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Fiscal Year 2023 Appropriations

Chair Schatz, Ranking Member Collins, and Members of the Subcommittee, the Western Governors' Association (WGA) appreciates the opportunity to provide written testimony on the appropriations and activities of the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT). WGA is an independent organization representing the Governors of the 22 westernmost states and territories. The Association is an instrument of the Governors for bipartisan policy development, information sharing and collective action on issues of critical importance to the western United States.

Like other regions of the nation, the western United States has a host of transportation-related needs. However, unlike other portions of the country, the vast distances between cities and abundance of sparsely populated rural areas present unique challenges for the states in the West. In terms of area, the states that make up WGA's footprint encompass 2.4 million square miles, or over two-thirds of the entire geographic area of the nation, while only accounting for 38 percent of total states. For these reasons, surface and air transportation have a profound effect on economic opportunity throughout the western United States. And while the passage of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA, Pub. L. 117-58) is a welcome opportunity for states in the West, full and consistent federal funding, by way of the Congressional appropriations process, is key to the long-term success of the West.

The recently reauthorized Highway Account in the Highway Trust Fund is an important element in addressing the critical maintenance and expansion necessary to our road systems. The Fund's Mass Transit Account, the Federal Transit Administration's Capital Investment Grants Program, investments in bridge rural infrastructure, the Tribal Transportation Program, and the Transportation Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (TIFIA) Program are also critical resources, all of which are dependent on annually appropriated dollars to ensure consistency in funding and provide assurances to states that their infrastructure needs will continually be met.

The Federal Lands Transportation Program (FLTP), administered by the Federal Highway Administration, seeks to improve the transportation infrastructure on lands managed by federal land management agencies, including the National Parks System (NPS), the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), the U.S. Forest Service, the Bureau of Land Management, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the Bureau of Reclamation (BOR), and others, all of which have a significant presence throughout the West. The IIJA authorized a total of \$2.19 billion for the program over the next five years, but like other surface transportation infrastructure needs, annual appropriation dollars are needed to maintain the program and guarantee its future

viability. Western Governors encourage the Subcommittee to allocate sufficient funding to the FLTP to ensure it meets its statutory objectives.

In addition to these more traditional forms of transportation, electric vehicle (EV) adoption and associated demands for public charging infrastructure are increasing across the West. Western Governors and states are exhibiting strong leadership on EV infrastructure planning, coordination and investment. WGA's Electric Vehicles Roadmap Initiative examined various factors that affect the expansion of regional EV charging networks in the West, including vast distances between communities, limited electric grid infrastructure in sparsely populated areas, and a patchwork of federal, state, and private ownership boundaries. These factors all contribute to the cost of deploying EV charging infrastructure. Western Governors appreciate the creation of EV infrastructure programs in the IJA that will help western states and communities deploy EV infrastructure and encourage the Subcommittee to support the Charging and Fueling Infrastructure Grant Program.

In addition to surface transportation, air transportation and infrastructure are also critical to addressing the unique needs of the West. The vast distances between population centers in the West can, in some cases, only be addressed by air service. For that reason, the Essential Air Service (EAS) and the Small Community Air Service Development Program (SCASDP) are critical to connecting these populations and ensuring their viability. Of the 180 communities that participate in the EAS, 110 (or 61 percent) are located in the West, which reflects the necessity of this program in the region. In fact, a 1 percent increase in traffic to an EAS airport results in a 0.12 percent increase in income for the entire community, and an 8 percent increase in traffic results in a 1 percent income increase. All businesses today need connectivity to the national and global economy in order to succeed, and the EAS provides rural communities with that connectivity and helps attract more businesses and workers to these areas. Along with EAS, the Small Community Air Service Development Program (SCASDP) grant program helps small communities address air service and airfare issues. Historically, air services initially assisted by SCASDP grants often continue without further SCASDP funding once their grants are exhausted, which proves the viability of the program and the value it brings to these communities. Western Governors support adequate investments in these two important programs.

Western Governors know, first-hand, the important role these surface, EV, and air transportation modes and infrastructures play throughout the nation, but especially in the West. Western Governors recognize the enormous challenge you have in balancing competing funding priorities, and appreciate the difficulty of the decisions the Subcommittee must make. These recommendations are offered in a spirit of cooperation and respect, and WGA is prepared to assist you as the Subcommittee discharges its critical and challenging responsibilities.