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rtachicago.org

March 27, 2024
The Honorable Sean Casten
United States Congressman
2440 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

RE: Pace – FY 25 CPF Transit Infrastructure Grant – Harlem Avenue Transit Signal Priority

Dear Congressman Casten:

The Regional Transportation Authority (RTA) supports Pace’s request for Community Project Funding to implement transit signal priority on Harlem Avenue between Ogden Avenue and 95th Street. The RTA conducts transit planning and oversees finances for the Chicago Transit Authority (CTA), Metra, and Pace, and serves as the taxing authority for Northeastern Illinois. The RTA has worked with the region’s transit operators to improve public transportation for decades, and improving bus speed and reliability are key components of our regional strategy to provide a high-capacity transit network throughout Chicagoland.

The vision of *Transit is the Answer*, RTA’s regional strategic plan, is safe, reliable, accessible public transportation that connects people to opportunity, advances equity, and combats climate change. The plan outlines 14 key Areas of Advocacy and Action that were co-created with stakeholders to guide priorities in areas like funding, safety, speed, and reliability. This project will help the region make progress towards our plan vision by making bus service faster and more reliable on one of the busiest suburban routes in the region.

Bus ridership along this stretch of Harlem Avenue is amongst the highest in Cook County. The requested funding would pay for implementation of transit signal priority (TSP) equipment at 30 traffic signals on Harlem Avenue. TSP creates shorter travel times for bus riders because it allows buses to communicate with traffic signals to shorten red lights and lengthen green lights for buses and makes transit more reliable and more attractive by giving buses an advantage over regular auto traffic. The implementation of TSP can create immediate benefits to transit riders at a modest cost, while also facilitating potential future development of full-fledged Pulse rapid transit service.

When policymakers invest in public transportation, it creates greater incentives for commuters to use transit, leading to many societal benefits--reduced traffic congestion, improved air quality, job access for those most in need, and economic development for local businesses. Pace's proposed investment in this corridor also



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offers benefits to historically disadvantaged communities in Cook County, in line with the Biden Administration's Justice40 initiative.

The RTA urges your full consideration of Pace's request under the applicable guidelines and looks forward to the successful completion of the Harlem Avenue Transit Signal Priority project.

Sincerely,

Leanne Redden
Executive Director