

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

December 16, 2022

The Honorable Pete Buttigieg
Secretary of Transportation
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary Buttigieg,

We write in support of the Tahoe Transportation District's (TTD) application to the U.S. Department of Transportation's Fiscal Year 2022 Strengthening Mobility and Revolutionizing Transportation (SMART) Grant to fund their intelligent transportation. Senator Cortez Masto worked to get this program included in the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) given the innovative transportation technologies that are being utilized in our state of Nevada.

As background, the Lake Tahoe region's natural attributes are the biggest driver of its \$5 billion annual economy, which is based on outdoor recreation and tourism. To underscore the transportation challenges and opportunities, the Lake Tahoe Basin's annual visitation is at least 15 million, which exceeds both the visitation of Yosemite National Park (5 million) and the busiest national park in the country, the Great Smoky Mountains National Park (12.5 million). Given this amount of annual visitors, the Tahoe Basin is experiencing significant highway safety issues and congestion. Given the environmental protections in place for the area and the infancy of public transit in the region, traffic during peak season can be delayed for hours, impeding emergency response vehicles. The annual average visitor numbers do not adequately illustrate the true management challenges the Tahoe Basin's Regional Partners face, because peak volumes are regularly four to five times the average volumes. Climate change threatens to further exacerbate these challenges and the pandemic has even further strained this region as more people are seeking the solace of the great outdoors in pristine locations such as the Lake Tahoe Basin. Thus, it is important to be able to accurately analyze the travel type and behavior to adaptively manage visitation and effectively shift modes through informed decisions across numerous landowners and in multiple jurisdictions.

Working together, the regional partners plan to develop a sensor-based urban platform, electronic wayfinding infrastructure, and connected transit and trail systems to inform all users of the transportation system. This effort can directly mitigate the increasing visitation and associated vehicle usage expected with demand from the surrounding urban growth and ensure that personal vehicle use impacts are considered in policy decisions, all while changing behaviors and shifting modes of transport that would reduce environmental and other impacts.

We appreciate this administration's focus on providing local communities the necessary tools to solve their own unique local challenges. The rural transportation system of the Lake Tahoe Basin needs our attention to support sustainable tourism and residential quality of life by prioritizing public safety, providing a safe driving experience, clearing congestion, and reducing vehicle miles traveled and associated greenhouse gasses. Any project in the Lake Tahoe Basin faces the unique challenge of needing to address an urgent infrastructure need while at the same time balancing the environmental concerns of the region and preserving Lake Tahoe's famed water clarity. Given these challenges, we ask that you give fair and full consideration of their application as a rural community and regional partnership. If you have any questions, please feel free to reach out to either of our offices.

Sincerely,



Catherine Cortez Masto
United States Senate



Jacky Rosen
United States Senate