

119TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. 2478

To direct the Secretary of Transportation to carry out a grant program to support efforts to provide fare-free transit service, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

JULY 28, 2025

Mr. MARKEY (for himself and Ms. WARREN) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs

A BILL

To direct the Secretary of Transportation to carry out a grant program to support efforts to provide fare-free transit service, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Freedom to Move Act”.

5 **SEC. 2. PURPOSE.**

6 The purposes of this Act are—

7 (1) to invest in State, county, and local munici-
8 palities efforts to provide fare-free public transpor-
9 tation; and

(2) to support State, county, and local municipalities in improving and expanding access to safe, accessible, and reliable mass transit systems in order to improve the livability of communities.

SEC. 3. DEFINITIONS.

In this Act:

(1) **ELIGIBLE ENTITY.**—The term “eligible entity” means—

(A) a State, county, or local municipality;

(B) a transit agency;

(C) a private nonprofit organization engaged in public transportation in rural areas; or

(D) a partnership between entities described in subparagraphs (A) through (C).

(2) **FOSTER CARE YOUTH.**—The term “foster care youth”—

(A) means children and youth whose care and placement are the responsibility of the State or Tribal agency that administers a State or Tribal plan under part B or E of title IV of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 621 et seq., 670 et seq.), without regard to whether foster care maintenance payments are made under section 472 of such Act (42 U.S.C. 672) on behalf of such children and youth; and

(B) includes individuals who were age 13 or older when their care and placement were the responsibility of a State or Tribal agency that administered a State or Tribal plan under part B or E of title IV of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 621 et seq., 670 et seq.) and who are no longer under the care and responsibility of such a State or Tribal agency, without regard to any such individual's subsequent adoption, guardianship arrangement, or other form of permanency outcome.

(3) LOW-INCOME INDIVIDUALS.—The term “low-income individuals” means an individual whose family income is at or below 150 percent of the poverty line (as that term is defined in section 673(2) of the Community Service Block Grant Act (42 U.S.C. 9902(2)), including any revision required by that section) for a family of the size involved.

(4) PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION.—The term “public transportation”—

(A) means regular, continuing shared-ride surface transportation services that are open to the general public or open to a segment of the general public defined by age, disability, or low income; and

1 (B) does not include—

2 (i) intercity passenger rail transpor-
 3 tation provided by the entity described in
 4 chapter 243 of title 49, United States
 5 Code (or a successor to such entity);

6 (ii) intercity bus service;

7 (iii) charter bus service;

8 (iv) school bus service;

9 (v) sightseeing service;

10 (vi) courtesy shuttle service for pa-
 11 trons of one or more specific establish-
 12 ments; or

13 (vii) intra-terminal or intra-facility
 14 shuttle services.

15 (5) UNDERSERVED COMMUNITY.—The term
 16 “underserved community” means—

17 (A) a community not served by existing
 18 bus routes or infrequent service; and

19 (B) a community located in an area within
 20 a census tract that is identified as—

21 (i) a low-income community; and

22 (ii) a community of color.

23 **SEC. 4. GRANTS TO SUPPORT FARE-FREE TRANSIT.**

24 (a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 360 days after the
 25 date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall award

1 grants, which shall be known as “Freedom to Move
2 Grants”, to eligible entities, on a competitive basis, to
3 cover the lost fare revenue for fare-free public transpor-
4 tation and improve public transportation.

5 (b) APPLICATION.—To be eligible to receive a grant
6 under this section, an eligible entity shall submit to the
7 Secretary an application at such time, in such manner,
8 and containing such information as the Secretary may re-
9 quire, including, at a minimum, the following:

10 (1) A description of how the eligible entity
11 plans to implement fare free transit access.

12 (2) A description of how the entity will work to
13 expand and improve bus service, which may in-
14 clude—

15 (A) a bus network redesign;

16 (B) how such redesign will prioritize con-
17 sistent and reliable service for low-income and
18 historically underserved communities;

19 (C) how such redesign will prioritize
20 connectivity to critical services and improve
21 community livability; and

22 (D) how the eligible entity will meaning-
23 fully consult with community, community lead-
24 ers, local stakeholders and advocates, including
25 transit advocates and disability advocates, local

education agencies and institutions of higher education, community developers, labor unions, public housing agencies and workforce development boards, while facilitating such redesign.

(3) A description of how the eligible entity will meaningfully partner and collaborate with community, community leaders, local stakeholders and advocates, including transit advocates and disability advocates, local education agencies and institutions of higher education, community developers, labor unions, public housing agencies, and workforce development boards to support outreach efforts to increase awareness of fare-free bus and transit programs.

(4) A description of the eligible entity's equity evaluation examining any transit and mobility gaps within the current transit system and how the eligible entity plans to significantly improve these gaps, including—

(A) the average commute times for driver commuters and non-driver commuters;

(B) public transit ridership rates disaggregated by mode of transportation and demographic group, including youth (including youth involved in the foster care system), sen-

1 iors, individuals with disabilities, and low-in-
 2 come status; and

3 (C) average length of bus routes and aver-
 4 age delay times.

5 (5) A description of the eligible entity's current
 6 fare evasion enforcement policies, including—

7 (A) the cost of the fine and whether the in-
 8 fraction is considered a civil offense or a crimi-
 9 nal offense punishable by imprisonment;

10 (B) the number of individuals charged with
 11 violating a fare evasion policy, disaggregated by
 12 age, race, gender, and disability status; and

13 (C) how the eligible entity plans to elimi-
 14 nate fare evasion policies and end the criminal-
 15 ization of individuals evading fares.

16 (6) An estimate of additional costs as a result
 17 of increased ridership, including—

18 (A) fuel;

19 (B) personnel;

20 (C) maintenance; and

21 (D) other operational costs.

22 (7) Information and statistics on assaults on
 23 transit employees and a description of trainings and
 24 policies to protect employees, which may include de-
 25 escalation training.

1 (c) DURATION.—Grants awarded under this section
2 shall be for a 5-year period.

3 (d) SELECTION OF ELIGIBLE ENTITIES.—In car-
4 rying out the program under this section, the Secretary
5 shall award grants to eligible entities located in both rural
6 and urbanized areas.

7 (e) USES OF FUNDS.—An eligible entity that receives
8 a grant under this section shall use such grant to sup-
9 port—

10 (1) implementing a fare-free transit program;

11 and

12 (2) efforts to improve public transportation,
13 particularly in underserved communities, including
14 costs associated with efforts to provide more safe,
15 frequent, and reliable bus service, including—

16 (A) bus stop safety and accessibility im-
17 provements;

18 (B) pedestrian and bike shelters;

19 (C) signage;

20 (D) painted bus lanes;

21 (E) signal priority systems;

22 (F) street redesign;

23 (G) operational costs to meet demands of
24 increased ridership, including hiring and train-
25 ing of personnel; and

1 (H) conducting a bus network redesign.

2 (f) REPORT.—

3 (1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 3 years after
4 the date on which funds are made available to carry
5 out this section, the Secretary shall collect data from
6 eligible entities receiving a grant under this section
7 on the progress of meeting the targets described in
8 the application of such entity.

9 (2) REQUIREMENTS.—The report required
10 under paragraph (1) shall—

11 (A) collect data on demographics of com-
12 munities served under this Act, disaggregated
13 and cross-tabulated by—

14 (i) race;

15 (ii) ethnicity;

16 (iii) sex; and

17 (iv) household median income; and

18 (B) progress towards significantly closing
19 transit equity gaps as described in subsection
20 (b)(4).

21 (g) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There is
22 authorized to be appropriated to carry out this section
23 \$5,000,000,000 for each of fiscal years 2026 through
24 2030.

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