



Do Something Today! Write to your Public Officials

Writing to your member of Congress is not as desirable as holding a face to face meeting. However, because your representative's schedule is so demanding a letter is often the most sensible way to communication with your elected officials.

You can find mailing addresses, fax numbers and email addresses for elected officials online at www.congress.org, as well as an online application to email your representative directly. Here are some tips for composing a letter:

- **In the first paragraph**, identify yourself as a representative of a coalition that represents a variety of the elected official's constituents. Identify the reason for writing and the issue(s) you wish to address. Highlight any relevant expertise you have on public transportation issues. Include information about the coalition (i.e. size, diversity of members, mission).
- **In the second paragraph**, state your views on the issue in your own words. Include a statement about the impact public transportation funding has had or will have on you and your community.
- **In the third paragraph**, clearly state what you would like the official to do.
- **Close the letter** by thanking the official for his or her attention to this matter and offer to be available for any questions.
- Be sure to be concise and thoroughly proofread your letter. Elected officials receive letters hundreds of issues every day, and staff often are left with the task of choosing a few clear, well-written letters on important issues to address to their boss, the actual office holder.
- **Limit Your Target.** Focus on the narrowest possible group of government officials. Identify supporters who hold key positions through which they can influence the issue, such as the leaders of specific committees and subcommittees. In the early stages of the legislative process, communications should be directed to the appropriate subcommittee and its chairperson, ranking minority party member, and members. Contact your own representatives, especially when they serve in these roles.
- **If an official does not respond to your letters within a month**, try sending a second letter that mentions the first correspondence. Public officials, especially Members of congress, are often overwhelmed with mail and some respond more quickly than others. Some officials only answer letters from their district or state. In these cases, you may need to visit the office personally.