

Thank you, Mr. Chair and members of the committee. My name is Patrick Pethybridge and I am a junior at East High School. I am writing in support of SB 22-180, Programs to Reduce Ozone Through Increased Transit. I moved to Denver in 2014, and the Regional Transportation District buses and trains played a major role in my daily life and independence as a preteen and teenager. Though I believe that RTD has not been accessible to those who would benefit from it, I strongly believe in its potential as a viable solution to lower the reliance on single-occupancy vehicles that we need to move beyond in order to combat climate change.

According to the USDOT, bus transit emits 33% less greenhouse gas emissions than single-occupant vehicles and light rail emits 62% less. Not to mention, riding public transportation saves over \$10,000 per year. Given these data points, public transit presents itself as a greener, cheaper option that people should take advantage of. Otherwise, we will have hazardous air quality, new and exacerbated respiratory illnesses, and other major, potentially irreversible, effects of global climate change.

Sustainable options for daily living are sorely needed to stem the tide on climate change. SB 22-180 would enable riders to seek RTD as a sustainable, cost-effective transportation option that limits the greenhouse gas emissions that cause air pollution. It would also spare the summer months from some of the high-ozone days when people cannot breathe clean air. Finally, it would invest in one of the most crucial hallmarks of major cities throughout the United States of America. That's why I am for Programs to Reduce Ozone Through Increased Transit.

## Fare Free Transit and Bustang Expansion – SB 180

Testimony – Alana Miller

April 28, 2022

Dear chair and members of the Energy & Environment committee,

My name is Alana Miller and I'm the Colorado climate policy director for NRDC, Natural Resources Defense Council.

I am in strong support of SB 180 and encourage a yes vote. This bill would eliminate transit fares when air quality is often the worst and would more than double the state's Bustang service. Expanding service and reducing transit fares will help address our air pollution crisis, reduce climate emissions, and expand access to opportunity while improving affordability.

I am also in strong support of an amendment providing additional funding for Revitalizing Main Streets. This program, established last year to help communities rebound from COVID, provides local grants to encourage active, pollution-free transportation, while supporting public space and economic vitality. The program has been a major success and local demand for funding outpaces the current budget.

Together, these three programs – expanding statewide transit service, providing fare free transit, and investing in community Main Streets – provide an innovative and impactful package to improve our transportation system and quality of life, while acting on air pollution and climate emissions.

**Air pollution:** Over the past few years we've seen record air pollution which puts our health at risk and worsens quality of life in the state. At a time when so many Coloradans would like to be outside with their families, the summers instead have been choked with pollution. Transportation, primarily from people driving their own vehicles, is a leading cause of air pollution in Colorado. Encouraging more people to take public transportation during ozone season with free transit, and year-round with expanded bus service across the state, will help tackle our air quality crisis.

**Climate:** Transportation is also the leading cause of global warming pollution in the state, again because most people need to drive their own car for most trips. Robust public transportation, when it is convenient and affordable, is one of our most promising climate solutions. Fare free transit has been shown to increase how many people take transit in the short term and in the long term. I believe that once people create new habits by having free access through this bill, many will likely continue to take transit regularly, especially with expanded options between our cities, towns and mountains.

**Affordability:** Finally, transportation is the second highest cost for most families. These high costs disproportionately impact low-income residents, often people of color, essential workers, and service workers, who must spend a greater portion of their income on getting around. This would help address transportation affordability while expanding access to opportunity.

To close, this piece of legislation, with the added amendment, is an important step in addressing many crises in the state. I am very excited for Colorado to lead by example with these programs and I look forward to continuing to support through the rollout and implementation.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony today.