

April, 11, 2017

Dear Committee:

Thank you for taking time to discuss this important issue. My name is Dave Appelhans, and I serve on City Council for Sterling in northeastern Colorado. I am sorry that I could not be there today in person to express my support for House Bill 1242. I am a strong supporter of this bill because I believe it provides several elements that will help our transportation sector in rural Colorado.

In Sterling, 16% of our residents are over the age of 65, and this population will continue to grow in coming years with aging baby boomers. This group in particular is dependent on our two regional bus systems: Prairie Express and County Express. Many kids in our community also rely on these services to get to and from school. Unfortunately, these buses don't run very often or have frequent stops due to our budget constraints. We're struggling to keep these programs funded, and have trouble hiring bus drivers due to the infrequent schedules and unreliable pay. We've also looked into alternative options, such as building safe bike and walking paths for kids to get to school, but often have to use funding that's designated for other uses, such as playgrounds or parks, to attend to these other projects.

House Bill 1242, could help my community solve many of our local issues because of the dedicated funding provided for multi-modal needs. For smaller, rural communities, we are not able to focus on important projects because there's not enough funding in our local budgets. We are also very interested in the local government funds which would be very flexible. Sterling is the largest town in Logan County, with a population of over 20,000 people. Many people who live in Northeastern Colorado or Southwestern Nebraska travel to Sterling for work, for their doctor's appointments, to run errands, or go shopping. This local government fund is very flexible and would help us fill potholes or widen shoulders on our highways. We can also use these funds as matching dollars for the multi-modal options fund and to pay for our local bus services if we choose to do so.

If we can get this bill passed with the current funding allocations, it would be a big help for small towns like Sterling. By paying close attention to these other transportation needs, we can make a big impact in how our community can be more successful, efficient, and safe. Without this funding, we are going to be forced to continue making tough decisions about which projects we can or can't work on. Whether it's kids getting to school safely, helping our elderly or disabled residents get to their destination, or helping people get to work, it's important to have a variety of

transportation options. A lot of folks may think that “multi-modal transit” just means a train in Denver, but in Sterling this means sidewalks, senior buses, widening highways to make them safer for pedestrians, and getting our kids to school. We need the dedicated funds in this bill, under their current allocations in rural Colorado just as much, if not more, than our urban neighbors.

As long as this bill maintains the current amount of funding for local government needs and multi-modal projects, our city and county will be able to focus on more of these important projects.

Thank you,

Dave Appelhans
Sterling City Council Member
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