



2019 Federal Legislative Agenda

Issue 1: Increased Support for Transportation

Federal programs and funding are essential for local street, bridge, transit, bicycle/pedestrian and interstate improvements. We are pleased that Congress passed the Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act, a five year, comprehensive transportation bill. The FAST Act allows us to better plan for and advance much needed local, state, and federal road projects by maintaining programs and funding shares. However, the FAST Act's funding increase of just 11 percent over five years falls short of this nation's transportation needs. We urge Congress to continue prioritizing transportation by fully funding Wisconsin's transportation priorities and returning Wisconsin's fair share of dollars; allowing states to explore tolling by removing federal obstacles such as prohibiting the establishment of tolls on existing interstates; and assuring the long-term health of the Highway Trust Fund by allowing the federal fuel tax to be indexed to inflation. The current federal fuel tax has not been adjusted since 1993.

Issue 2: Funding Support for Public Transit

The Janesville Transit System (JTS) meets the transportation needs of the public by providing daily bus service within Janesville and regionally, allowing citizens to get to work, school, and essential services such as healthcare. Federal funding is vital to supporting JTS capital needs and daily operations. We are encouraged by Congress passing the FAST Act and Janesville's recent receipt of capital funding for buses. However, federal transit funding is not distributed equitably to states. Currently, Wisconsin accounts for two percent of the nation's population but receives just one percent of the funding. We remind Congress of the importance of funding the Bus and Bus Related Facilities program and the annual operating assistance program to provide adequate support for transit services in Wisconsin.

Issue 3: Continued Support for Housing and Community Development Programs

Federally-backed housing and community development programs are critical to assisting Janesville's citizens and supporting the local economy. The Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) and Home Investment Partnership (HOME) programs are essential in countless communities across the country, including Janesville. These programs help revitalize neighborhoods, encourage home ownership, improve housing quality, provide employment opportunities, and provide low- and moderate-income residents with housing. Approximately 70 families in Janesville obtained decent, safe, and affordable housing in 2017 as a result of these programs. Since 2010, CDBG funds have declined by 13.5 percent. The HOME Program saw its first increase in many years last year, for which we are very appreciative. The President's FY2019 Budget includes further significant reductions to these critical programs. The City requests that CDBG and HOME funding remains a budgetary priority and that CDBG funding be restored to 2010 levels. Through the Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) Rent Assistance Program, the City assists approximately 500 families each month, providing an essential safety net for low-income families. The families assisted in Janesville have an average income of \$10,962 a year, and 65 percent of those assisted are elderly or disabled. Administrative fees for the HCV program are insufficient to operate the program in a manner that truly supports and encourages families in obtaining self-sufficiency. Administrative fees have declined from a 93 percent pro-ration in 2010 to 76-80 percent in 2018. We request that Congress increases funding to 100 percent of fee eligibility. Finally, in June 2017, participating agencies were asked to provide feedback on reducing the regulatory burden in HUD-funded programs. We encourage Congress to review comments received by Janesville and other agencies and attempt to address the challenges raised, thereby improving the efficiency and effectiveness of these programs.

Issue 4: Railroad Safety and Disclosure of Hazardous Materials

When emergency events involving trains occur, local first responders are tasked with protecting life and property within the affected communities. However, railroad companies have little responsibility to those municipalities. We are pleased that the FAST Act included the requirement that local first responders be informed about hazardous materials traveling through their jurisdiction before the train arrives. However, this is just a starting point and the requirements should be expanded. For instance, local emergency personnel should be informed about materials in rail cars that are stored in yards and any "off-loading" of material that may occur within their jurisdiction. We ask Congress to continue refining rail safety and reporting requirements so that railroad companies are accountable to the local municipalities that shoulder the responsibility for managing rail-related emergency events.