



March 3, 2026

Assemblymember Howard Watts, Chair
Joint Interim Standing Committee on Growth and Infrastructure
Transmitted via email: GRInterim@lcb.state.nv.us

RE: Public Comment for March 3, 2026 Meeting

Dear Chair Watts and Members of the Committee,

The Nevada Environmental Justice Coalition (NEJC) appreciates the opportunity to provide Information that is relevant to agenda items regarding public transportation funding in advance of the Joint Interim Standing Committee on Growth and Infrastructure Meeting on March 3, 2026.

NEJC is a statewide coalition of community organizations fighting for intersectional climate action and environmental justice through grassroots organizing and policy advocacy. Together, our members work to prioritize justice in the fight to protect our state's natural resources through a social and racial equity lens, to ensure a just transition away from extractive industries, and to liberate frontline communities from environmental hardships.

At a time when climate scientists tell us we have less than a decade to take action to avoid the worst impacts of climate change, we recognize the uneven distribution of adverse impacts on frontline communities, vulnerable populations, and future generations.¹ Transportation is the largest contributor to greenhouse gas emissions in Nevada, making it a central issue in the fight against climate change.² Expanding access to reliable public transit can help reduce emissions from personal vehicle usage and mitigate the worsening impacts of heat, drought, and air quality degradation.³

Transportation investments play a powerful role in building and rebuilding communities by expanding access. For example, it is easy to travel in Las Vegas by car because most of our transportation funding is used to support driving infrastructure like roads. Just as the ways we choose to travel are important for meeting sustainability goals, so are the public policy and

¹ Hsu, A., Sheriff, G., Chakraborty, T. et al. Disproportionate exposure to urban heat island intensity across major US cities. *Nat Commun* 12, 2721 (2021). <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41467-021-22799-5>

² Nevada Division of Environmental Protection. (2023). Nevada Statewide Greenhouse Gas Emissions Inventory and Projections, 1990-2043. Retrieved from https://ndep.nv.gov/uploads/air-pollutants-docs/ghg_report_2023.pdf.

³ U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. (n.d.). Overview of air pollution from transportation. U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Retrieved from <https://www.epa.gov/transportation-air-pollution-and-climate-change/overview-air-pollution-transportation>

infrastructure decisions we make to ensure that all people can benefit from transportation investments.

When transit is fast, frequent, safe and on-time, community members and neighborhoods who have historically been left behind have more opportunities to get a better-paying job, visit a family member, buy fresh groceries, attend classes, or see a doctor. Commuting time and reliability are critical concerns we often hear from community members. In Las Vegas, while 950,000 jobs are accessible by car within 30 minutes, only 11,000 are accessible by public transportation.⁴ This stark disparity limits economic opportunity for those who depend on transit. When people can reliably reach more jobs, they gain access to new employment opportunities that can improve their chances of upward social mobility. Public transportation opens doors to positions they would otherwise be unable to pursue.

In our 2024 survey in partnership with the UNLV Public Communications Initiative, we learned this issue also significantly affects rural Nevada, where residents have voiced concerns about the lack of reliable transportation.⁵ Many rural community members reported needing to take time off work to drive themselves or family members to cities for healthcare services, creating financial strain and barriers to essential medical care. Creating more connected, transit friendly communities is crucial for equitable and sustainable growth across the entire state.

Making public transit accessible means that we have to look beyond transit alone. It means we need more lighting so our pedestrians can feel safe, it means crosswalks need to be shorter and sidewalks need to be wider. In 2021, the Guinn Center reported that Southern Nevada community members were most likely to experience extreme heat while using public transportation.⁶ In our own survey, many riders pointed to inadequate infrastructure as a primary safety issue, noting that transit stops often lack shade structures to protect them from extreme heat while waiting for buses after having to walk to the stop. Others expressed feeling unsafe due to narrow and low sidewalks, with some recounting incidents of people being run over while waiting at bus stops by irresponsible drivers. Another significant safety concern that emerged was gender based harassment, with women reporting feeling unsafe due to lack of proper lighting at transit stops and along walking routes to and from those stops. We cannot access places unless we feel safe and comfortable doing so.

When considering how to raise funds for public transportation, we urge you to do so in an equitable manner. There have been proposals to increase fare fees or raise the sales tax to generate additional revenue, but these approaches disproportionately harm working families

⁴University of Minnesota, Center for Transportation Studies. (2021). Access across America: Transit 2021. Retrieved from <https://www.cts.umn.edu/publications/report/access-across-america-transit-2021>

⁵ Bloomfield, E. F., & Wuester, R. J. (2024, July). Report on the Climate Survey regarding Nevadans' Priorities and Opinions on Affordable Housing, Public Transportation, Extreme Heat, and Water. Greenspun College's Public Communication Initiative at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas.

⁶ Guinn Center. (2021). Strengthening heat resiliency in communities of color in Southern Nevada. Retrieved from <https://guinncenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Guinn-Center-Strengthening-Heat-Resiliency-in-SNV.pdf>

and current transit riders. These are the very community members that public transportation funding is intended to support. Increasing the financial burden on those who depend most on transit moves us further away from achieving affordable, accessible and equitable transportation for all Nevadans.

Funding for public transportation is not only needed to keep our current infrastructure functional, but it is essential for making critical improvements. These improvements should include increasing routes, including those along the Las Vegas Strip, to better serve both tourists and the resort workers who power our tourism economy. We need to enhance key routes for campus commuters at local colleges and universities, ensuring that students and staff are not waiting over an hour for buses, especially during extreme heat conditions. Bus stops must be improved with essential features like shade structures, accessibility improvements, and access to drinking water. Paratransit services for people with disabilities require expansion, extending both the coverage area and operating hours to meet the needs of all riders. We also must create new transit options connecting urban and rural Nevada, improving access to healthcare, essential services, and job opportunities for residents in every part of the state. Finally, we need to make public transportation more affordable, especially for students and low income residents who depend on it most. Equitable investment in public transportation is an investment in the future of all Nevadans.

We appreciate your consideration of this information as you consider the implications to funding public transportation in Nevada.

Respectfully,

/s/ Jackie Spicer
Coalition Coordinator
Nevada Environmental Justice Coalition
jackie@nvenvirojustice.org