

March 12, 2018

The Honorable Elaine L. Chao
U.S. Secretary of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Ave, SE
Washington, DC 20590

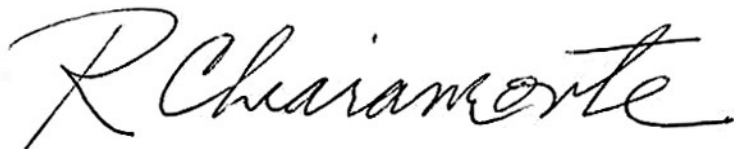
Dear Madam Secretary:

As the Executive Director of the Tampa Bay Area Regional Transit Authority (TBARTA), I am writing to encourage you to fully fund and award grants to meritorious projects under the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Capital Investment Grants (CIG) program. This program is critical to the economic vitality of the Tampa Bay region, just as it is throughout the country. The Central Avenue Bus Rapid Transit in St. Petersburg, Florida is the Tampa Bay Region's first-ever CIG eligible project and we are hopeful that it will receive federal funding in FY 2019. This cost effective Small Starts project is an unprecedented achievement for the Tampa Bay region:

- Bipartisan support from state, regional and local leaders
- Support from transit agencies and planning organizations throughout Tampa Bay as well as the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT)
- Recognized as an essential priority project by the Tampa Bay Area Regional Transit Authority (TBARTA)
- Will provide a fast, efficient and needed transit alternative for one of the country's fastest growing populations where there is no room to build new roads
- Will serve the increasing transit needs between Pinellas County's award-winning beaches and downtown St. Petersburg in a corridor heavily used by both workers and millions of tourists
- Will connect economically disadvantaged communities to booming job markets in St. Petersburg and along the gulf beaches
- Received a MEDIUM-HIGH rating in the FY19 CIG Report released in February, 2018
- Financial commitment from the City of St. Petersburg to achieve HIGH financial rating

I ask that you to support this important grant program and help our region reach a transportation milestone that has been decades in the making. With its efficient design and unprecedentedly broad support from the community, governmental agencies, and elected officials, the Central Avenue Bus Rapid Transit project can become an FTA showcase for lean, successful, modern transit.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "R Chiamonte". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Ramond A. Chiamonte