

VOICES FOR PUBLIC TRANSIT



Understanding How to Make an Impact in the Legislative Process

From the outside looking in, what goes on in Washington, DC, can seem confusing. Congress follows many unusual rules, and legislation becomes law through a long, multi-step process.

That said, the legislative process offers advocates lots of opportunities to make an impact. Below, we've highlighted the key parts of the process—and how you can make an impact each step of the way.

1



Before a bill is introduced

Even before a bill is introduced, you can let your legislators know that public transportation is important to you, and that you want them to develop policies that support investments, expansions, and improvements. This is also a key time to raise awareness and help build support among other people in your communities.

2



A bill is introduced

Communicate with your U.S. Representative or Senators, share your views, and ask them to share your position. If you support a bill, ask your officials to be "co-sponsors."

3



Committee debate and hearings

New bills are "referred" to House or Senate committees and subcommittees for discussion and hearings. If your Representative or Senators sit on a committee considering a bill, now is a great time to make sure they know where you stand.

4



Mark-Up

Bills can be altered and amended during this period. If you support legislation but think it needs changes—or if you want to be sure key parts of the legislation make it through unchanged—now is the time to weigh in.

5



Debate and Voting

If a bill is passed by a committee, it goes to the full House or Senate for debate and a vote. This is crunch time: even if you have communicated with your legislators before, make sure they hear from you again—especially those officials who haven't committed one way or another.

6



On to the Other Chamber

Once a bill is approved by the House or Senate, it is referred to the other chamber for consideration. The other chamber may work on its own bill at the same time, too. Engage like you did the first time around.

7



Conference Committee

If debate and mark-up in the House and Senate result in different bills on the same measure, those bills have to be reconciled into a single piece of legislation—and then voted on again. Don't let up! Make sure your legislators keep hearing from you.

8



Presidential Signature—or Veto

The President may have already staked out a position on the legislation, but now is when you can communicate with the White House, urging support or a veto.

How to Communicate Your Views

There are numerous ways you can make sure legislators know your views throughout the legislative process:



Contact them directly

First and most important, communicate directly with your lawmakers through emails and calls. If you can meet with them face to face, even better!



Use social media

Making your views known on social media can also help during this time, not only for sharing your views, but also getting other voters to share theirs as well. Be sure to mention your public officials by name on your Facebook page or blog, @mention them on Twitter, or comment on their social media pages.



Contact local media

Local news media is another great way to make sure your public officials know where you stand. Submit a letter to the editor or op-ed, call into a radio talk show that is discussing the issue, or make sure local bloggers and reporters know what's happening with the issue and how it affects your area.



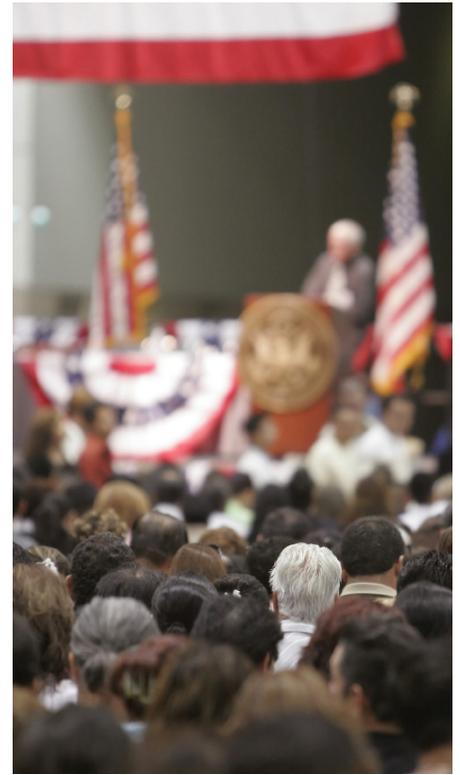
Watch for hearings and town hall meetings

Your public officials may hold hearings or town hall meetings on the legislation, and these usually offer an opportunity for the public to comment. You may be able to submit written comments, or speak up at a local meeting. ▶



Share what you're doing

Whenever you take an action, be sure to share it with the other members of Voices for Transit and your own networks by posting on social media or sharing your experience on our website.



Remember, **VOICES FOR PUBLIC TRANSIT** is here to help. Contact us if you have questions.
