

June 11, 2026

The Honorable Ted Cruz  
Chairman, Senate Committee on  
Commerce, Science, and Transportation  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Maria Cantwell  
Ranking Member, Senate Committee on  
Commerce, Science, and Transportation  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Cruz and Ranking Member Cantwell,

As the leading national organization representing individuals with spinal muscular atrophy (SMA), Cure SMA writes to respectfully request your support in strengthening disability access provisions in the surface transportation reauthorization. We are grateful for the Committee's work on this legislation and ask for your partnership in ensuring the Senate's bill reflects the full range of needs of people with disabilities.

SMA is a genetic neurodegenerative disease that destroys motor neurons controlling movement, including walking, eating, and breathing. It affects residents in all 50 states and occurs in approximately 1 in 15,000 births in the United States.<sup>1</sup>

Because SMA is progressive, 76 percent of adults living with SMA rely on power wheelchairs and accessible public transportation to reach medical care, maintain employment, and participate in community life.<sup>2</sup> People with SMA are part of the approximately 18.6 million Americans who have a travel-limiting disability. The Bureau of Transportation Statistics found that 40 percent of working-age adults with significant disabilities such as SMA made zero trips on an average day due to mobility barriers.<sup>3</sup> Surface transportation policy shapes access and community participation for the SMA and disability communities. An **adult with SMA** shared, *"I've learned to adapt to the physical challenges (of living with SMA), but transportation has always been essential to maintaining some independence."*

Cure SMA asks the Committee to include distinct disability access provisions to meet the needs of the SMA and broader disability community. We support provisions that uphold protections under current law, including the Americans with Disabilities Act, require consultation with disability stakeholders during project planning, and establish clear accountability for accessibility outcomes across both existing and emerging transportation modes. Including these provisions in their own dedicated section, separate from highway safety, would give transit agencies, advocates, and communities the clarity they need to plan and deliver truly accessible systems.

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<sup>1</sup> Cure SMA. *2025 State of SMA Report*. Published May 13, 2026. Available at: [www.curesma.org](http://www.curesma.org).

<sup>2</sup> Cure SMA. *2025 State of SMA Report*. Motor Function Status, p. 19. Published May 13, 2026. Available at: [www.curesma.org](http://www.curesma.org).

<sup>3</sup> U.S. Department of Transportation, Bureau of Transportation Statistics. *Travel Patterns of Adults with Travel-Limiting Disabilities*. 2024. Available at: [www.bts.gov/travel-patterns-with-disabilities](http://www.bts.gov/travel-patterns-with-disabilities).

We also ask the Committee to maintain dedicated formula funding for paratransit and accessible transportation services for individuals with disabilities and seniors. Nationally, adults with disabilities are nearly three times as likely to lack reliable transportation as those without: 14.4 percent compared to 4.9 percent.<sup>4</sup> A protected funding stream, whether through a standalone program or a guaranteed set-aside within a broader structure, would ensure these individuals continue to have access to the transportation they depend on.

In addition, we ask the Committee to include protected funding for accessible vehicle acquisition and to make accessibility an explicit evaluation criterion in competitive bus grant programs. As **one adult with SMA** shared, *“Accessible busses are how I get to doctors appointments and participate in my community. I depend on knowing that the bus that comes to pick me up will be accessible.”* Ensuring that transit agencies can replace aging fleet vehicles with accessible ones is essential to keeping the SMA community connected.

Finally, we ask the Committee to advance appropriate funding for the All Stations Accessibility Program. Station accessibility projects are multi-year capital investments, and long-term funding allows transit agencies to plan and execute them effectively. Advanced appropriations would give agencies the confidence to move forward on upgrades that make rail systems accessible to wheelchair users and others with disabilities.

Accessible transportation is a critical part of what makes community participation possible for the SMA community. Cure SMA and our supporters across the country look forward to working with the Committee to ensure the surface transportation reauthorization builds on that progress and strengthens the systems people with disabilities rely on. For more information, your staff may contact Sarah Bellish, Senior Manager of Policy and Advocacy at Cure SMA, at [sarah.bellish@curesma.org](mailto:sarah.bellish@curesma.org) or 202-871-8005.

Sincerely,



Maynard Friesz  
Vice President, Policy & Advocacy  
Cure SMA



Sarah Bellish  
Senior Manager, Policy & Advocacy  
Cure SMA

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<sup>4</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. QuickStats: Percentage of Adults Aged ≥18 Years Who Lacked Reliable Transportation for Daily Living in the Past 12 Months, by Disability Status and Age Group — National Health Interview Survey, United States, 2022. *MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep.* 2024;73(7). Available at: [www.cdc.gov/mmwr](http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr).