

MAXINE WATERS

MEMBER OF CONGRESS
43RD DISTRICT, CALIFORNIA

COMMITTEE:
FINANCIAL SERVICES
RANKING MEMBER

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-0535

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July 8, 2024

Secretary Pete Buttigieg
U.S. Secretary of Transportation
Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Ave, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary Buttigieg:

I urge you not to sign a Full Funding Grant Agreement with the Inglewood Transit Connector Joint Powers Authority for the Inglewood Transit Connector project. The Inglewood Transit Connector (ITC) project is a proposal to build a 1.6 mile, fully automated, elevated, fixed-guideway transit system with only three (3) transit stations in Inglewood, California, for an extraordinary total cost of more than two billion dollars. As the Member of Congress who represents the City of Inglewood, California, I cannot support this project.

As you may recall, I had initially supported the ITC when the project was in its early planning stages. In April of 2021, I submitted a request to the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee for a \$20 million planning grant for the project, in response to a grant application from the City of Inglewood. At that time, the City had estimated that the ITC would cost about one billion dollars. Since then, the estimated cost has doubled. Now that I have a more complete understanding of both the cost of the project and the implications for the people of my congressional district, I have come to the conclusion that I must oppose the ITC.

The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) estimated that the ITC will cost \$2,018,860,000. It is my understanding that, pending the completion of a Full Funding Grant Agreement, the FTA has approved \$1,009,430,999 in grant funds under the Capital Investment Grants (CIG) program to finance the building of the ITC, and this CIG grant would cover approximately 50 percent of the cost of the project. The FTA's proposed budget includes the first \$200 million of this CIG grant for the project in Fiscal Year 2025.

Based upon the FTA's project profile, the estimated cost of the ITC would amount to more than \$1.261 billion per mile of transit built and more than \$672 million for each of the three stations. Furthermore, the Eno Center for Transportation estimated that the ITC project would cost \$470,000 per estimated daily rider and designated the project as an outlier among projects approved under the CIG program.

For comparison purposes, Metro's K Line, which runs through my district and was previously known as the Crenshaw/LAX Corridor, cost approximately \$2.5 billion to construct but travels 8.5 miles and includes eight (8) stations. The cost of the K Line was less than \$300 million per mile of transit built and approximately \$313 million for each of the eight K Line stations.

I am also deeply concerned about the impact that the construction of the ITC would have on the people of Inglewood. Last year, local news outlets, including the *Daily Breeze*, *NBC (Channel 4)*, and *ABC 7 Eyewitness News*, reported that more than 40 Inglewood businesses will have to be relocated under eminent domain in order to make room for the ITC. I informed you last year of my concerns about the potential displacement of local businesses, but there has not been any real effort to address these concerns.

I strongly support efforts to expand access to public transportation services for the people of the City of Inglewood. Unfortunately, the ITC is not designed to benefit the local community, and it will not provide convenient connectivity to employment or public services for local residents. Instead, the ITC is designed primarily to allow public transit users to connect the extra 1.6 miles from Metro's K Line to sports and entertainment venues. Shuttle buses could most likely accomplish the same goal at a fraction of the cost, but have not been seriously considered as an alternative.


Inglewood and the surrounding communities of Los Angeles County are also characterized by a severe affordable housing crisis with over 75,312 people experiencing homelessness. Since May 2020, house prices have increased by 37 percent in the Los Angeles metro area with rents increasing by more than 21 percent during the same timeframe. Today, the average renter in Los Angeles pays more of their income on rent than ever before, while 89 percent of extremely low-income renters are paying over half of their income on rent. These high levels of rent burden are resulting in increased evictions, diminished access to the dream of homeownership, and more families falling into the cycles of poverty, debt, and homelessness. In fact, the ITC threatens to exacerbate this crisis by displacing long-time Inglewood residents and small and minority-owned businesses and diverting resources away from some of the most urgent needs of the local communities in my district.

Indeed, the ITC project proposes to use more than \$500 million in matching funds from the State of California. This comes at a time when the State is experiencing a \$68 billion deficit and has proposed a more than \$1 billion cut to the Fiscal Year 2024-2025 housing budget as compared to the prior fiscal year. The ITC will do nothing to address the affordable housing or long-term transportation needs that are so pressing for the residents of Inglewood and those of my Congressional District.

For all of the above reasons, I have come to the conclusion that the ITC will not provide sufficient benefits to the people of Inglewood to justify its construction. The Federal, state and local funds that have been proposed for the ITC would be better spent on programs that improve access to affordable housing and other essential community services for the people of Inglewood and the surrounding communities.

I therefore respectfully request that you refrain from signing a Full Funding Grant Agreement with the Inglewood Transit Connector Joint Powers Authority for the Inglewood Transit Connector project. I appreciate your attention to my concerns about this project, its tremendous costs, and its impact on the communities in my district.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Maxine Waters". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Maxine" being more prominent than the last name "Waters".

Maxine Waters
Member of Congress

cc: Gov. Gavin Newsom, Governor of California
Acting Administrator Veronica Vanterpool, Federal Transit Administration (FTA)
Rep. Tom Cole, Chair, Appropriations Committee
Rep. Rosa DeLauro, Ranking Member, Appropriations Committee
Rep. Steve Womack, Chair, Transportation and Housing and Urban Development
(THUD) Subcommittee
Rep. Mike Quigley, Ranking Member, Transportation and Housing and Urban
Development (THUD) Subcommittee