



Congress of the United States  
House of Representatives  
July 13, 2017

The Honorable Bill Shuster  
Chairman  
Committee on Transportation & Infrastructure  
2165 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Peter DeFazio  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Transportation & Infrastructure  
2164 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Shuster and Ranking Member DeFazio:

I am writing to express the priorities of my community for federal infrastructure, as the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee works on its large-scale infrastructure investment legislation during the 115<sup>th</sup> Congress.

As you know, our country's infrastructure is in desperate need of investment. The American Society of Civil Engineers recently gave America's infrastructure a score of D+; we can do better. For far too long, we have underinvested and relied on short-term funding measures that do not provide the level of funding or stability we need to support our growing economy. By reversing our failures and directly investing in infrastructure we could create three million jobs, with hundreds of thousands in the state of Colorado alone.<sup>1</sup>

Throughout Colorado there is widespread support for investing in infrastructure. I stand ready to work with members and leaders of both political parties to ensure thoughtful legislation moves through Congress as rapidly as possible. An innovative "infrastructure package" relying on public investment will create millions of good paying jobs. It will bring more connections and more opportunities to our communities, and it will bring our infrastructure system into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, providing a jumpstart to our economy and businesses from urban to rural to suburban areas.

Any legislation must include robust direct investment in our infrastructure. Although public-private partnerships can be a useful tool in some circumstances, they are not a universal fix, and may place a burden on our communities and constituents through tolls, decreased funding for other local priorities, and higher local taxes. This is especially true for districts such as Colorado's Second Congressional District, which is largely composed of a rural geographic area. As follows, I encourage you to prepare bipartisan legislation that will increase American competitiveness through direct federal investment and private partnerships in specific circumstances, only when appropriate.

When considering what types of projects should be invested in infrastructure legislation, the funding must follow a standard formula for both small and large projects. The focus of these

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.bcg.com/publications/2017/engineered-products-project-business-maximizing-job-creation-impact-trillion-infrastructure-spending.aspx>

projects must be balanced, first looking toward projects upgrading and repairing infrastructure, then toward new projects.

The district I have the honor of representing has two major interstates that are the arteries for the entire State of Colorado, with hundreds of thousands of commuters, tourists, and families using Interstate 25 (I-25) and Interstate 70 (I-70) each day. If you were to drive either of these interstates at almost any time, day or night, you would see how desperately our interstate system is in need of upgrades. People spend hours in I-25 traffic commuting between Fort Collins to Denver on weekdays, or on I-70 coming back from the mountains on the weekends. Both corridors need repairs and innovative and multi-faceted solutions to relieve congestion. I was proud to have passed legislation in 2015 making a portion of I-70 in Colorado a federally designated Corridor of High Priority, but that designation only makes a difference if we provide investment and funding to upgrade our country's interstate system.

Our investment in infrastructure should not end with roads and bridges. A 21<sup>st</sup> Century infrastructure plan must be based on a broader definition, and should include investments in public transportation, multimodal transportation, energy efficiency and modernization, water, high-speed internet, housing, and schools.

Alternative modes of transportation such as busses, rail, pedestrian, and bike routes, must be given the same priority as roads and bridges. We must acknowledge the fact that multimodal and public transportation can provide a more efficient, cost-saving, and enjoyable way of commuting and travelling between communities. In my district, the Northwest Rail Line will connect Boulder and Longmont to Denver, but the project has been delayed by 30 years because of the lack of funding. I hear consistently from my constituents about the need for it to be done sooner. Clearly, construction of the Northwest Rail Line would be a huge economic benefit for Colorado and relieve congestion. Federal investment in rail will allow us to complete needed and locally supported projects.

The infrastructure package must also address the point of intersection between different modes of transportation, including points at which rail crosses both urban and rural roads. I hear from many communities in Colorado, including Fort Collins and Longmont, about the downtown disruption from loud train horns and lack of flexibility under the current Train Horn Rule (49 CFR Part 222). In lieu of a change to this rule, communities need additional funding to improve safety of intersections in order to receive a Quiet Zone waiver under the Train Horn Rule.

One type of effective funding is a TIGER grant. A wide variety of transportation projects have been effectively funded by TIGER grants- one of the most successful grant programs in recent history. In Colorado alone, TIGER grants have provided safety to those driving through the Eisenhower Tunnel by funding a fire suppression system, helped reduce congestion and shorten commutes on US36 and I-70 and have moved I-25 construction ahead more quickly. The TIGER Grant funds have even been used for Train Horn Rule waiver construction projects. It is absolutely necessary for this program to continue and be expanded under any infrastructure investment now and in the future.

Energy efficiency and public land infrastructure must also be a priority within the package, including updating our energy grid, investing in energy efficiency and updating infrastructure such

as campgrounds and roads on our public lands. Our energy grid is wholly inadequate, prone to physical and cyber-attacks, and the potential for electrical service interruptions increases each day and would cause dire economic harm. As part of upgrading the energy grid, investments must be made in energy storage technologies, which will be an important element of utility electrical transmission and distribution systems of the future.

Our water systems are just as vital, and as recent events in places such as Flint have made clear, investments in our water systems are necessary to keep our children and communities healthy with clean and accessible drinking water, and our agriculture industry strong with available and affordable water. Water investments are not just an Eastern U.S. issue though, as was shown earlier this year in Colorado when 100 of 178 tested schools were found to have lead in their water. In Colorado we have an estimated \$7.1 billion dollars in drinking water infrastructure needs, and \$4.69 billion in wastewater needs.

In the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, high-speed internet is not a luxury. It is an essential service for schools, homes, hospitals, and businesses. If a school doesn't have high-speed connectivity their education will be subpar. If a hospital can't access high-speed internet, they will be slower to respond to emergencies and care for patients will be inadequate. Many of the communities in my district, like parts of unincorporated Jefferson County, Kremmling, Red Cliff, Estes Park and Bailey, lack high-speed internet and struggle to attract or retain businesses and residents because they are insufficiently connected.

In addition to equipping our schools with high-speed internet, a national infrastructure package must also include support for bringing our school facilities into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Outdated school facilities can pose a significant health risk to students and teachers. According to the 2016 *State of Our Schools*, Colorado is experiencing a \$640 million gap in school capital construction expenditures. We should aim for excellence knowing that investments in school construction can also help address equity gaps in our public school system, ensuring that all schools, including high-poverty schools with fewer resources, have updated facilities and equipment that foster learning.

Long-term affordable housing is also a core part of our nation's infrastructure, and any infrastructure package must support programs that are aimed at creating transit-oriented community solutions that meet the needs of every community. Every dollar invested in housing infrastructure and planned transit communities helps boost local economies, generates local income and tax revenue, and creates hundreds of local jobs.

Thank you for taking into account the priorities I have included in this letter as you work on any type of infrastructure investment or "package". I am encouraged that infrastructure is a top priority for all Americans. I stand ready to work with you on any legislation that includes these priorities.

Sincerely,



Jared Polis  
Member of Congress