



Connecting Americans to Prosperity: How Infrastructure Can Bolster Inclusive Economic Growth (2/9/2022)

Investments in physical infrastructure, including roads, bridges, public transit, broadband internet, drinking water, and wastewater are critical to creating a strong and sustainable economy. Physical infrastructure inherently benefits the public at large and directly contributes to the country's economic productivity. When designed and implemented effectively, sustainably, and inclusively, physical infrastructure connects people to economic and employment opportunities, as well as critical services that significantly improve quality of life.



Past major infrastructure investments expanded our country's macroeconomic capacity and performance, but not all Americans experienced such benefits. Infrastructure development failed to reach — and in some cases actually harmed — certain urban and rural communities. The past disparities in infrastructure investment across the country have contributed to uneven economic growth among regions and populations, especially those of color.

Possible Policy Solutions

During the hearing, experts offered the following potential recommendations for the Select Committee to consider:

Plan and Build Smarter Infrastructure

- Foster more regional and equitable infrastructure development using competitive grant programs and incentives in existing program rules.
- Partner relevant engineering innovations with principles for fair planning, design, and maintenance of infrastructure.
- Use smart city principles to improve existing services and generate economic opportunities.
- While strictly enforcing privacy, provide guidance and funding to state and local governments to deploy smart city technologies to collect public data, efficiently transmit information to residents, and manage city assets.
- Equip public housing infrastructure with high-speed broadband access.
- Reform and modernize the definition of universal service.
- Congress currently employs dynamic scoring to offset spending and make future projections on the outcomes of legislation; the Administration should also bring that perspective and apply it to the potential for new economic development when considering infrastructure proposals.

Establish a New Standard for Equity in Upcoming Infrastructure Projects

- Ensure equitable access to infrastructure systems – such as roads, bridges, water systems, broadband networks, etc. – by preventing excessive fees and other exclusionary practices.
- Ensure every K-12 student is prepared to use basic digital technologies.
- Prioritize transit projects that shorten long, multi-stop commutes between minority communities and job centers.
- Fix highways that divide neighborhoods and fix roads to foster economic opportunity.
- Establish equity goals in the \$65 billion broadband allocation from the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) of 2021.
- Establish criteria to monitor and evaluate current and future infrastructure systems and projects for equity objectives.
- Provide technical assistance and capacity building to rural communities, underserved urban communities, and smaller counties who seek to obtain technical assistance to implement critical infrastructure community projects.

Streamline Bureaucratic Processes While Maintaining Essential Protections

- Streamline procurement processes, simplify federal lending programs, and unbundle large contracts to help minority-owned companies be more competitive and create jobs in their communities.
- While maintaining high environmental standards, improve federal approval and permitting processes to expedite project delivery and build infrastructure that communities need to increase Americans' economic prosperity.

Expert Hearing Panelists

The following experts provided the possible policy recommendations listed above:

- **Dr. Carlos Martín**, David M. Rubenstein Fellow, The Brookings Institution; Director of the Remodeling Futures Program, Harvard University
- **Dr. Nicol Turner Lee**, Senior Fellow in Governance Studies, Director of the Center for Technology Innovation, Co-Editor-In-Chief of TechTank, The Brookings Institution
- **Mr. Rick Wade**, Senior Vice President of Strategic Alliances and Outreach at the U.S. Chamber of Commerce
- **Ms. Eileen Higgins**, Commissioner, Miami-Dade County, District 5
- **Mr. Neal Crabtree**, Foreman, Pipeline Welder

