

Statement by Rep. Linda T. Sánchez
Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
Member Day Hearing
April 14, 2021

Thank you, Chairman DeFazio and Ranking Member Graves, for this important opportunity to highlight the needs of working families in my community.

In Southern California, we are used to wasting years of our lives to just sitting in traffic. For so many families, the pandemic has been the first time that traffic wasn't a daily reality in their lives.

And for a short time before wildfire season, we experienced the cleanest air anyone can remember after our highways emptied out. It shouldn't take the worst global health crisis in a century and our lives coming to a standstill just to experience some fresh air.

We've got to do better.

Especially for communities like mine in eastern LA county that have seen transportation investments pass us by. I've been proud to work with LA Metro, the county, and local agencies on projects to fix this inequity.

For example, the West Santa Ana Branch will finally bring rail service to 1.2 million LA County residents who have never had an alternative to sitting in traffic – whether in a car or a bus.

Once this 19 mile corridor is complete, it will link many of the cities I serve like Bellflower, Artesia, and Cerritos with the entire LA Metro rail network. Many other cities I represent can also finally look forward to rail service through the extension of the Gold Line through the Eastside Corridor Phase 2.

This critical project will bring clean, affordable transportation and historic opportunity to the cities of Montebello, Pico Rivera, Santa Fe Springs, and Whittier. Neither of these projects by themselves will erase decades of underinvestment. But they are exactly the kind of meaningful differences we can make to reduce some of the daily pressure on working families.

And neither would be possible without my community's willingness to vote itself tax increases time and again. We put our own skin in the game over and over again because we can't wait any longer to fix the federal government's historic obsession with highways that divide our communities.

While we build a future for our kids that isn't dependent on sitting in a car, we also have got to take better care of the roads and bridges we will continue to rely on. The Del Amo Boulevard bridge is a perfect example of what happens when the federal government fails to keep up with the basics.

It's over 50 years old, rated "structurally deficient," and snarls traffic every single day. It also connects 2 counties and 3 cities. So it is the kind of project that the federal government should help fix.

Fortunately LA Metro has stepped up with county tax dollars so that we can proceed with the project's planning.

But this transportation reauthorization should be the first step in better helping our communities keep up with our infrastructure needs. After the crisis we have lived through, the work we are doing this year is deeply urgent to finally put the pandemic in the rearview mirror.

But we can't just rebuild to the old normal where the first breath of clean air came from our economy closed overnight. We've got to rebuild to a future where clean air and opportunity is a reality for all. No matter the zip code.

By properly funding critical projects like these, we will.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, I yield back.