



June 8, 2021

The Honorable Peter DeFazio
Chairman
House Committee on Transportation
and Infrastructure

The Honorable Eleanor Holmes Norton
Chair
House Subcommittee on Transportation
Highways and Transit

Dear Chairs DeFazio and Norton:

On behalf of the American Highway Users Alliance (Highway Users), a coalition of 300 organizations including companies, trade associations, safety advocacy groups, and motoring clubs that represent millions of motorists and serve as the united voice of the motoring public, we are pleased the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure is moving forward with the transportation reauthorization process through the introduction of H.R. 3684, the "INVEST in America Act." **The Highway Users is generally supportive of the bill and happy to see legislation progressing through regular order. We would like to work with you on the areas identified below which we believe would improve the bill substantially for America's highway users.** We hope to continue to have a dialogue on items within the bill as Congress moves forward to – we fervently hope – timely enactment of reauthorization legislation.

The Highway Users members are especially appreciative of the robust funding levels and programmatic stability provided by the bill. The five-year authorization period and the \$319 billion allocated for highways (exclusive of earmarks, NHTSA and FMCSA funds), provides a significant increase over FAST Act levels. The combination allows for the funding stability necessary for both industry and State transportation department planning and project delivery purposes. From a Highway Users' perspective, this is extremely positive.

The Highway Users is also very supportive of the substantial funding increase for the Highway Safety Improvement Program included in H.R. 3684. 38,680 people were killed on U.S. roadways in 2020 and working to reduce that number toward zero deaths is one of our top priorities. We look forward to a continued dialogue regarding provisions permitting the flexing of FHWA HSIP funds to non-infrastructure projects and continue to be concerned with the flexing of these funds.

There are a few areas in which we believe the bill could be strengthened. We would like to discuss these items as the reauthorization process proceeds:

- We request an increased emphasis on investment to address the massive highway and bridge program shortfalls. The 23rd edition of the USDOT's Conditions and Performance Report on Highways, Bridges and Transit identifies a \$786.4 billion backlog of highway and bridge investments, roughly 7-8 times the backlog for transit identified in the same report. The Highway Users feels it is extremely important to do more to address this massive highway and bridge backlog. Also, as the vast majority of highway projects are in the nature of system preservation, making rides smoother, reducing the delays and idling related to suboptimal road conditions, highway investment is also good for safety and the environment.

- We have concerns with new eligibilities for highway funds, because there is already a massive highway needs backlog for existing eligible projects.
- We support additional efforts to streamline the delivery of projects while protecting the environment. For example, codifying USDOT's "One Federal Decision" policy would be helpful in this regard.
- Finally, we encourage flexibility for State and local agencies to add new highway capacity where needed. Capacity is still needed in many parts of the country and supports safety, congestion relief, the reduction of GHG in some instances, freight mobility, tourism, and other sectors of the economy. We appreciate the language in the section-by-section clarifying that safety improvements would not be considered "new capacity" where the bill restricts it and request that this language be included in the committee report, if not the bill itself.

The deadline to reauthorize surface transportation programs is quickly approaching. The Highway Users are ready to work with all parties moving forward to ensure a long-term bill will be signed into law before we face an absence of program authorizations. Failure to act promptly could halt important road and bridge projects and will further disrupt America's economic recovery.

The Highway Users members are eager to work with your Committee and all concerned as the process unfolds. We are here to serve as a resource for you and look forward to working together to enact legislation this summer. Addressing the nation's infrastructure needs will help every individual and business as we emerge from the pandemic. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at lauraperrotta@highways.org or 571-239-0765. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,



Laura Perrotta, CAE
President and CEO

cc:

The Honorable Sam Graves, Ranking Member, House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee
The Honorable Rodney Davis, Ranking Member, House Subcommittee on Highways and Transit
The Honorable Thomas R. Carper, Chair, Senate Environment and Public Works Committee
The Honorable Shelley Moore Capito, Ranking Member, Senate Environment and Public Works Committee