

REP GILBERT R. CISNEROS, JR.
T&I MEMBER DAY TESTIMONY

Intro

Chairman DeFazio, Ranking Member Graves, and members of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, thank you for allowing me this opportunity to provide input on infrastructure priorities on behalf of the residents of California's 39th Congressional District. For the benefit of my district and communities nationwide, I urge you to work together in a bipartisan fashion to provide increased funding for transportation projects while supporting sustainable energy and environmental policies to address climate change.

Roads & Transit

The condition of California's roads is among the worst in the nation, ranking 49th according to the latest US News & World Report Ranking. And our transit systems, which are needed to reduce congestion on our highways and improve air quality, received a C minus rating by American Society of Civil Engineers' most recent report card. Federal funding is necessary to fill the gaps and allow our state to address infrastructure backlogs. And sustained funding levels is not sufficient to address these severe backlogs. Rather, I urge you to put together an infrastructure package that authorizes higher funding levels above what is needed to account for inflation.

For example, I urge you to increase the authorized funding available for the INFRA discretionary grant program. Stakeholders in my district have been working to advance the 57/60 Confluence Chokepoint Relief Project along State Routes 57 and 60 for over a decade to improve freight mobility, relieve congestion, and enhance passenger safety in our region. This year, I led a bipartisan letter in support of the community's second application for an INFRA grant to cover just six percent of the projects' total funding after their application was rejected last year. I have met with local officials who highlighted that in the year that has lapsed since their grant application was denied, the total cost of the project has increased due to the delayed start date and recent changes in trade policies. Clearly, this program fulfills a nationwide need and current funding levels are not enough to support even the smallest of federal matching requests from state and local officials in my district.

Further, I encourage you to authorize and make permanent the Transit Oriented Development (TOD) pilot program. The City of Placentia in my district is proceeding with site planning and has secured local and state funding for a new MetroLink station. Federal funds through the TOD program would allow for strategic planning to support economic development plans. Making this successful program permanent would reassure communities like Placentia that federal support will remain available for development planning.

Climate Change

I believe a successful infrastructure package should not only address transportation and transit infrastructure backlogs and support jobs nationwide but will also enhance infrastructure resilience and prioritize investments that result in a reduction of climate pollution. Like many

states, California has been directly impacted by the devastating natural disasters exacerbated by climate change. For my region, climate change drives up temperatures and increases wildfire risks. Integrating sustainability and resiliency policies into your infrastructure package now will help mitigate temperatures increases, limiting the length and damage of wildfire seasons and ensuring communities are prepared for the growing risks of wildfires.

For instance, I urge you to authorize higher funding levels for the Low or No Emission Vehicle Program under the Federal Transit Administration. California has set a statewide goal for public transit agencies to gradually transition to 100 percent zero-emission bus fleets by 2040. This requirement is expected to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 19 million metric tons, the equivalent of taking 4 million cars off the road. Transit entities across my district are working hard to meet this goal, but federal support is needed to ensure full and timely implementation. The so-called “Low-No” bus program will help transit systems in my district transition their fleets to the lowest polluting and most energy efficient vehicles.

Conclusion

Thank you again for your time and consideration. I know you have a tough job ahead of you and I hope you will keep these stories in mind as you craft a bold infrastructure package for the benefit of communities nationwide.