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JC Testifying at Transportation and Infrastructure Hearing Transcript

JC: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman and Ranking Member. I want to thank this committee for providing the opportunity for Members to present on our priorities and projects, not only for our respective districts but also for our country.

I think one of the most important things we can do in this Congress would be a major, bipartisan infrastructure package. I know that the Chair, and many other members, are keen on the idea. I am more hopeful after yesterday's meeting with the Chair and other Democratic Leadership. An investment of 2 trillion dollars in America's infrastructure is on point. Testimony last month before the Ways and Means Committee between business and labor estimated a similar figure. We have at least a trillion dollars dedicated to rehabilitating existing infrastructure. In addition to that, the necessary future investment will be at least another trillion dollars.

The reality is that we are living off the investments that our parents (and our grandparents) made a generation (or two) ago. Look at the success Asian or European infrastructure renewal. Guess what? It's only there because they paid for it. They made the investment. We can all agree that Democrats and Republicans all want to invest in infrastructure. But we can also all recognize the main obstacle to that goal: how to fund it. This can't happen unless we can agree upon real money. The White House put forward a framework last year, but it had no meat-on-the-bone. They didn't put forward any funding plan. Without it, it an infrastructure plan cannot become real.

Many states—including my home state of California—have come up to the plate. In California, we passed a 10-year program for \$50 billion dollars in investment. Over 20 other states, many with Republican-controlled legislatures, have passed similar measures. We haven't increased the gas since 1994. I don't think that there is one single funding formula. Instead, we should look at a menu of choices. So where do we go?

We need to look at water. Our water infrastructure is aging. We absolutely need to invest in clean drinking water. At the same time, we also need to invest in our overall water supply. The food on American tables every night depends on a reliable water supply. The reality of climate change has made reliable water reserves even more critical.

On transportation, our roadways and bridges are aging. Transportation infrastructure renewal will be key. Having carried multi-billion dollar measures in California to fund our transportation system, I can tell you it's a mix of using all modes of transportation. There is no single mode of transportation that addresses all needs. Furthermore, we need to update and invest in 21st-century technologies. Along with co-chairs Congresswoman Zoe Lofgren and Congressman Lou Correa, I have worked to provide billions of dollars of state money for High Speed Rail in California. But now we need the Federal Government to step up to the plate.

And guess what? It's no mystery how Europe, Japan, and China built their high-speed rail system. It's not rocket science. They were able to build them because their national governments decided to make a commitment. They made it happen; they made a long-term commitment. I wonder how President Lincoln would have reacted, posed with the question of the transcontinental rail road during the Civil War, to critics who said, 'Abe, why don't you wait until your second term?'

It happens only when you put real money on the table to make it happen. I think we should reward states for investing in all modes of transportation – whether that's high speed rail, roadways, freeways, or bridges. I think we should match funds and reward states and local governments that have skin in the game.

With that, Mr. Chairman, I commit to helping this committee and this Congress to pass this bipartisan infrastructure package because it's not just our future, it is also jobs, and it will improve our economy. I look forward to working with you on this critical issue. We have our work cut out for us. I believe with the right attitude—and real money—we can make it happen.