

U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Natural Resources
Washington, DC 20515

May 6, 2019

Chairman DeFazio and Ranking Member Graves:

There is broad consensus that previous Congresses and Administrations failed to invest sufficiently in our nation's infrastructure. The degrading impacts of this prolonged failure are evident in the crumbling roads and malfunctioning mass transit systems Americans are forced to navigate daily.

Sadly, when those same weary commuters embark on vacation visits to National Parks, Wildlife Refuges, Forests or other federal conservation and recreation areas, they face the same decrepit infrastructure, which degrades their visitor experiences and harms the natural resources they travelled to enjoy.

Fortunately, there is also broad public consensus that now is the time for Congress and the Administration to work together to address this national emergency. I appreciate the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee's invitation to Members of Congress to offer testimony regarding our nation's infrastructure needs and write to offer an assessment of those needs on federal lands.

Highway Trust Fund Programs

Through the most recent funding legislation (FAST Act, P.L. 114-94), the Federal Highway Trust Fund (HTF) provides significant funding for infrastructure programs on federal lands. Whether through a reauthorization of the HTF, or as part of a larger infrastructure package, these programs deserve increased funding.

Federal Lands Transportation Program (FTLP): FTLP provides funding for federally-owned transportation assets on public lands. Investing in high-priority assets would go a long way towards reducing the federal land management agencies' deferred maintenance backlog, as many of the most pressing and expensive maintenance needs—including over \$6 billion of NPS' \$11.9 billion backlog—are driven by transportation infrastructure. The program is currently authorized at \$355 million annually, to be divided among more than half a dozen federal land management agencies.
Request: \$750 million annually.

Tribal Transportation Program: roads and bridges on Tribal land are among the most dilapidated in the nation. The ongoing failure to provide for adequate transportation systems for Native People is a breach of the federal government's trust responsibilities. The Tribal Transportation Program distributes funding based on a formula calculating road mileage, tribal population, and relative

need. The program is currently funded at \$485 million annually, with a new Self Governance program allowing qualifying tribes to administer the spending. **Request: \$800 million annually.**

Federal Lands Access Program (FLAP): FLAP supports State and locally-owned transportation assets that allow Americans to access and enjoy their public lands. As the availability of public, open spaces for Americans to recreate dwindles, the infrastructure making remaining federal areas accessible is more important than ever. FLAP is currently authorized at \$260 million per year. **Request: \$500 million annually.**

Puerto Rico and Territorial Highway Programs: The Puerto Rico and Territorial Highway Programs are funded at \$158 million and \$42 million, respectively. Not only has this level of funding proved inadequate to meet existing needs, recent severe weather events have devastated infrastructure in these areas. Climate change will only cause more frequent disasters. **Request: \$300 million for Puerto Rico and \$100 million for other U.S. Territories.**

Funding Subject to Appropriations

In addition to funds from the Highway Trust Fund, Congress has provided funding from the General Fund, subject to appropriations, for the Puerto Rico and Territories' Highway programs; such funding must continue.

Congress has also provided appropriated dollars for the Nationally Significant Federal Lands and Tribal Projects Program (NSFLTP). This program, designed to address large-scale projects costing more than \$25 million, is a critical funding source for once-in-a-generation funding needs and must continue to receive significant resources.

Critical Aspects of a Larger Infrastructure Proposal

In addition to extending the vital funding provided through the Highway Trust Fund, there is also broad public support for more comprehensive legislation with the potential to remake transportation and infrastructure in the United States. Should Congress find the will to approve such legislation, projects and programs on federal lands must be included.

U.S. Forest Service Legacy Roads and Trails Program (LRT): Appropriated funding for this USFS program has been eliminated, but between 2008 and 2012, the program provided \$300 million for storm proofing roads, bridges and trails for more extreme weather; culvert replacement; fish passageway; trail repair; and decommissioning of unneeded or environmentally hazardous roads. Reinstating LRT funding would help prepare the National Forest System for future climate change, including the likelihood of more extreme weather. **Request: \$80 million annually.**

National Park Service Cyclic Maintenance, Repair, and Rehabilitation Projects: Much of the multi-billion-dollar maintenance backlog facing our National Park System is infrastructure related. A new, significant investment in the maintenance of established assets would prevent further additions to the deferred maintenance backlog. **Request: \$200 million annually.**

Community Wildfire Protection Planning: It is estimated that more than 70,000 U.S. communities are at risk from wildfire in the wildland-urban interface, yet fewer than 15,000 have wildfire protection plans. Programs like Firewise USA help assist communities become fire adapted by providing a collaborative framework to help reduce wildfire risk but are similarly being underutilized considering the size and scope of wildfire risks to communities. A new Community Wildfire Protection Planning program would provide financial and technical assistance to communities, as well as home and business owners, to help improve resilience by utilizing wildfire resistant building materials for new construction and retrofits, assessing hazards, sharing best practices for wildfire risk reduction, and creating wildfire protection plans based on science-based forest restoration. **Request: \$150 million annually.**

Civilian Conservation Corps: Civilian Conservation Corps help federal land management agencies perform necessary maintenance and upkeep on federal lands, including the creation and maintenance of trails and important forest resiliency work. These programs help the agencies maintain assets under their care and provide job training and real-world skills to service members, including tribal youth. **Request: \$20 million annually.**

Wildlife Corridors: America's native fish, wildlife, and plant species have been declining as a result of habitat loss, fragmentation, and degradation. Data shows that maintaining habitat connectivity supports higher species diversity and lowers their risk of extinction. Wildlife corridors, road crossings, and other habitat connectivity efforts are necessary to ensure wildlife can continue to migrate, move, and thrive in the face of increasing threats, while protecting public safety. **Request: \$20 million annually.**

Coastal Resiliency Grants: Coastal Resiliency Grants would improve upon the National Oceans and Coastal Security Act administered by NOAA. Currently, the Act allows NOAA to better understand the oceans, coasts, and Great Lakes. A new grant program would direct funding to protecting, conserving, and restoring coastal resources, including efforts to address impacts of sea level change, sedimentation, and hurricanes. **Request: \$100 million, annually.**

Living Shorelines: Congress should authorize a Living Shorelines program under NOAA to issue grants to States and local governments to carry out shoreline stabilization projects that utilize natural materials. Living shorelines use plants or other natural elements to stabilize estuarine coasts, bays, and tributaries. Living shorelines are often better than "hard" shoreline stabilization methods by providing nutrient pollution remediation, essential fish habitat, and buffer the shorelines from waves and storms. They also store carbon. **Request: \$20 million annually.**

Tribal Climate Change Infrastructure Program: Coastal tribal communities are on the front lines and currently experiencing the effects of climate change. A comprehensive infrastructure package should include support for moving tribal communities from land damaged due to a rise in ocean water levels. This program should also include emergency recovery efforts for tribes drastically impacted by severe storms or flooding related to climate change. **Request: \$100 million annually.**

I am well aware of the difficulty your Committee and the Congress faces in designing and funding a plan ambitious enough to address this nation's infrastructure emergency. As Chair of the Natural

Resources Committee, I can attest that the infrastructure needs on federal lands are significant, and I stand ready to assist in your efforts to craft a solution that will keep this country moving forward.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Raúl M. Grijalva". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial "R".

Raúl M. Grijalva

Chair

House Natural Resources Committee