

April 14, 2021

**Testimony submitted to the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure by  
Congresswoman Jahana Hayes**

Thank you Chairman DeFazio and Ranking Member Graves for having this Member Day Hearing today.

The state of Connecticut and my district in particular are clear examples of the critical need for immediate investment in forward-looking, climate change mitigating infrastructure. Almost 70 percent of our bridges are over 50 years old – the fourth highest percentage in the United States. Of the 4,238 bridges in Connecticut, 332 are classified as structurally deficient, with repairs needed across the board. These repairs are estimated to cost over \$1 billion to complete. In addition, nearly 25% of Connecticut’s bridges are considered outdated and do not meet current standards. With some bridges seeing as many as 145,000 daily crossings, the danger that these structurally deficient bridges pose can not be understated.

Our roads are in similar concerning condition. Over two-thirds of our major roads and highways in Connecticut are in poor to mediocre condition. Connecticut’s deteriorating roads now cost motorists over \$6 billion a year in unnecessary repairs, accidents and congestion-related costs.

At the core of these issues is chronic underinvestment. In Connecticut, underinvestment has meant that available funds mainly go to basic maintenance and upkeep of our transportation systems, rather than modernization or improvements. Nationally, we know that we have an investment gap of \$2 trillion over 10 years to fix our current infrastructure, meet future needs, and restore our global competitiveness. The longer we wait to invest, the more expensive each project becomes.

For these reasons, I am very pleased to see that this Committee is again taking up Surface Transportation Reauthorization, and is allowing for Members to submit the projects that are most important to their communities. In discussions with our State Department of Transportation, there are several projects that federal funding would catalyze, improving commuting experiences, enhancing road quality and safety, and bolstering local economies. Some of those projects are as follows:

- Interchange improvement at I-691 and I-91: Improvements to this section of highway would reduce congestion for traffic movement.
- Improvements on Routes 63, 64, and I-84 Waterbury Exit 17: This project would address safety and operational concerns associated with traffic delays and crashes at this very busy stretch of highway right outside my hometown of Waterbury, Connecticut.
- Farmington Canal Heritage Trail Construction: Surface Reauthorization funds could be used to connect the Farmington Canal Heritage Trail from Town Line Road north to Norton Park.

I look forward to submitting the highest priority projects to your Committee later this month for consideration. In the broader package, there are a few key provisions that are of the highest priority for my constituents. First, is corrosion, which threatens the continuous operation of

roads, bridges, electrical power systems and water systems and exacts a global cost of \$2.5 trillion. I hope to see full inclusion of a corrosion control policy implemented at USDOT.

Second, any infrastructure plan must bring all stakeholders into the fold and allow local municipalities with expertise in their respective regions to be at the table. That is why it is important that we increase funding for the Surface Transportation Block Grant Program (STBGP), which provide states and Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPO) the most flexibility to implement regional priorities. Increasing the allocation to this program will further enhance local authority in determining transportation improvements.

Lastly, in many areas of Connecticut, there is an inconsistency between the metropolitan planning area under the jurisdiction of an MPO and the Census-defined urbanized area. Regional planning areas have evolved over time and represent long-standing inter-municipal relationships and better reflect commute and travel patterns and transportation issues and needs. Census-defined urbanized areas are not consistently reflective of transportation realities. Making sure that our infrastructure system is nimble and able to adapt when needed is key to long term success.

Thank you again for this opportunity to advocate for the priorities of my constituents. I look forward to working with the Committee on these priorities.