

Congressman Derek Kilmer
Chair, New Democrat Coalition

Statement for the Record
House Committee on Transportation & Infrastructure – Member Day Hearing
Wednesday, May 1, 2019

As the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee begins to work on a comprehensive, and much needed, infrastructure package, I appreciate this opportunity to share my priorities. As the Chair of the New Democrat Coalition, a group of more than 100 Democrats in the House seeking to look at old problems through a new lens, I view this effort to modernize America's aging infrastructure as an essential component of our broader efforts to create jobs, spur economic growth, and increase our global competitiveness.

Last Congress, the New Democrat Coalition's Infrastructure Task Force set broad priorities in "[*Four Pillars for an Infrastructure Deal*](#)." We proposed a plan that would:

1. Modernize America's infrastructure funding, revenue sources, and cost analysis;
2. Create an infrastructure bank to finance projects;
3. Create incentives for communities most in need of building and maintaining their infrastructure, including through grant programs; and
4. Encourage innovation and reform, including responsible regulatory streamlining and private public partnerships, and the adoption of new innovative technologies.

This Congress, our coalition is encouraged by the renewed, bipartisan support for advancing legislation that will deliver on our nation's infrastructure priorities, and we respectfully recommend the Committee take the following recommendations into consideration as you begin crafting this comprehensive infrastructure package.

First, we need to create a reliable funding source for infrastructure that can't be looted for other projects. Even when federal funding exists, local communities are running into real challenges when trying to access it. Our constituents are ready for innovations in financing. Among other things, our coalition believes there's room for private public partnerships. I urge the Committee to modernize funding for existing entities like the Highway Trust Fund while also exploring new ideas like a public-private National Infrastructure Bank, which could leverage federal funds to provide low-cost loans or guarantees to state or local governments to finance qualified infrastructure projects.

Second, in addition to upgrading our existing infrastructure, we need to invest in new public transportation, alternative transportation (like bikes and "last mile" alternatives), and project-based funding to give our communities the flexibility to meet their unique local needs. These projects are critical to connecting underserved communities to economic opportunities, alleviating strain on our existing roads, and reducing the overall environmental impact of our transportation system.

Finally, the Committee should provide dedicated support for projects that help communities become more energy efficient, resilient and better prepared to deal with the impacts of climate change. Communities across our country, especially our densely populated economic centers and coastal communities, are already experiencing the consequences of climate change. We need to invest in projects that enhance climate resilience, while also reducing pollution and carbon emissions. The New Democrat Coalition urges the Committee to take a climate-forward approach to any infrastructure package.

Infrastructure projects are consistently evaluated as the best return on government investments, so investing in our infrastructure is more than just good politics, it's good economics. Supporting the movement of people and goods on our nation's roads, bridges, ports, and airports is crucial to driving investment in our communities. Enclosed with this statement is a copy of "Four Pillars for an Infrastructure Deal" put out by the New Democrat Coalition Infrastructure Task Force. I hope you will consider these ideas as the committee develops an infrastructure package this Congress.

Our coalition is eager to take advantage of this opportunity to bring our infrastructure into the 21st Century, and we look forward to working with you to achieve this goal.