

Congressman Ben McAdams
Member Day Hearing Testimony

May 1st, 2019

House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure

Chairman DeFazio, Ranking Member Graves, Members of the committee, thank you for holding this hearing and bringing to light the many infrastructure issues we must address.

In Utah's Fourth Congressional District, the need for investment in our infrastructure has never been more apparent. I'm here to work with the committee on infrastructure needs that include proactive solutions for congestion, poor air quality, and technological advancement.

First, I urge the committee to pass the COMMUTE Act (H.R. 1517). This bipartisan bill directs the Department of Transportation to develop and provide states, regional metropolitan planning organizations, and rural planning organizations with important data about measuring transportation modes and use. These data tools are vital for improving funding and policy mechanisms. Access to data also encourages effective coordination between transportation agencies and organizations and spurs economic development.

It is vital that when considering how to implement transportation policy, we look to local and regional groups who are already doing the work on the ground. As the former mayor of Salt Lake County, I know the importance of deliberative and collaborative transportation planning. That's why I would encourage the committee to look at ways to fund and support regional planning organizations. Rural, regional, tribal, and metropolitan planning organizations are critical partners for the federal government. Without these organizations, our most pertinent transportation and infrastructure priorities would not make it far.

I'd recommend the committee look at ways to fully fund the surface transportation agencies and the Highway Trust Fund and direct funding towards repairing thousands of miles of roads and bridges. The Salt Lake valley and Utah valley are growing rapidly, and with that growth comes more wear and tear on our existing roads and bridges while new roads are being paved every day. Responsible funding for our roads and bridges are investments for the thousands of people choosing to make the Salt Lake valley and Utah valley their home.

I would also suggest the committee restore funding for the Bus and Bus Facility Program, which has helped connect Salt Lake valley and Utah valley. Expanded bus services along the Wasatch Front has been fundamental for our growing economy, which is why I would suggest the Committee reestablish the capital investment ratio among Capital Investment Grants, State of Good Repair and Bus program to a 40-40-20 percent ratio.

In addition to funding important transit programs, another part of the infrastructure equation must be cutting down on vehicle emissions. To better address the growing population and air quality problems faced in the Salt Lake valley and Utah valley, I also am asking the committee to

properly fund the No/Low Emissions Grant program. This program increases public transit options while cutting back carbon emissions.

One way to cut back on carbon emissions and air pollution in the Salt Lake valley and Utah valley is by addressing congestion problems. The I-15 corridor along the Wasatch Front is one of the most congested areas in the country. This area is the source of massive time waste for many Utahns. Congestion causes economic delay and a productivity decline in products delivered as well as massive amounts of vehicle exhaust emissions. Economic interests should inspire an efficient transportation system. FAST Act reauthorization should include specific solutions for congestions and the associated challenges.

Innovative technological solutions for congestion should include resources for state and municipal governments that integrate technology into the transportation system and address bottlenecks and gridlock. Performance-based planning could be used as a tool for robust investment when looking for cost-effective solutions. A mix of formula and discretionary investments should be authorized, leveraging private-public partnerships. As the Silicon Slopes continue to drive innovative technology, we should actively support private-public partnerships that support local businesses.

I ask the committee to find funding solutions for the Surface Transportation Block Grant Program, which provides flexible funding for states and localities to improve, plan, and implement local transportation priorities. This important program helps develop everything from road and bridge repair, to pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure to capital projects like bus terminals. I also would encourage the committee look at other means of support for multimodal investments, which allows communities the ability to prioritize federal funding based on local needs.

Further, I know that environmental assessments and consultations are important part of the infrastructure development process. I also believe there are opportunities to streamline environmental assessments while maintaining integrity in the environmental review process and robust consultation between all stakeholders. I ask the committee to find ways to make the environmental assessments more efficient and effective.

As Salt Lake City International Airport continues to see rapid increase in traffic, I believe it is vital to address the Federal Capital Investment shortcomings. Adjusting the Federal Capital Investment would help modernize and expand terminals and tarmacs across the country. Additionally, increasing funding for the Airport Improvement Program would significantly reduce the burden felt by many of our nation's strained airports, including Salt Lake's airport.

I also recommend the committee pursue policy requiring specific energy and environmental outcomes that enhance electrification initiatives, which will allow for older and outdated diesel propulsion to transition to clean and renewable electric energy. While not specifically excluded from the FAST Act or Federal Transit Administration's (FTA) evaluation criteria, the addition of language in section 5309(e)(2)(A) that includes programmatic components of electrification or non-carbon-based propulsion would reinforce this policy directive.

Another active step towards infrastructure development is to fully fund the Capital Investment Grant Program, which provides funding for capital investments for transit infrastructure, including rapid transit and rail projects.

The existing FTA Section 5309 Core Capacity program focuses on investments that relieve overcrowding in an existing fixed guideway corridor. I would suggest that the Committee broaden the eligibility of this funding source to look at growth projections to help facilitate the completion of critical policy goals at Federal and State Level.

For example, the 90-Mile commuter rail service that connects the entire Wasatch Front, the FrontRunner, serves a population of 2.3 million people. It also shares the congested corridor of Interstate I-15. Given the drastic impacts that come with widening I-15 on the 40 communities it bisects, laying additional track along with the existing single track would not only expand commuter opportunity but cut down on cars on the roads and air pollution in the Salt Lake and Utah valleys. Double tracking the FrontRunner is expected to triple the ridership.

Current statute (Sec. 5309(e)) limits Core Capacity funding to situations where transit is already overcrowded or will be within five years. I recommend including language that extends eligibility to projects that increase service and reduce headways on existing fixed guideway systems. Expanding eligibility to projects that increase frequency on existing lines, even where capacity is not yet exceeded, would allow transit agencies to more effectively plan and better serve existing transit markets while increasing ridership and reducing emissions. In Utah, this change could expand FrontRunner service by double tracking and electrifying existing lines.

I also ask the committee to look for opportunities to expand water infrastructure investments. While not in this committee's jurisdiction, I support efforts to increase resources for the completion of the Central Utah Project. This project, authorized under the Central Utah Project Completion Act (CUPCA), is working to deliver fresh water to ten Utah counties.

Lastly, I urge the committee to look at funding for the Brownfields program, which provides vital funding for community cleanup and redevelopment of previously polluted or dilapidated areas. These funds leverage \$17 for every \$1 of federal spending.

We owe it to the next generations to leave them a world-class infrastructure system that uses advanced technologies to address our toughest problems in environmentally sustainable ways. I look forward to working with the committee on developing these innovative solutions. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony.