

Chairman DeFazio and Ranking Member Graves:

Thank you for scheduling this Member Day for the Transportation and & Infrastructure Committee.

Today, I would like to highlight one of the problems impacting Arizona's First Congressional District

In the past, this Committee has addressed many of the infrastructure issues impacting my District and other rural parts of the country, and I hope we can continue that work.

In Arizona, the Indian School Bus Route Maintenance Program has enabled young students to receive educational opportunities once thought unavailable.

Unfortunately, in 2012, this program expired, and since then Navajo children have struggled.

More than 9000 miles — or about two-thirds of public roads on the Nation — are unpaved.

These roads can become impassable during rainy or snowy weather.

This poses many challenges for the families and children on the Navajo Nation.

When road conditions are poor, school buses simply cannot bring kids to school safely. Navajo children repeatedly find themselves stranded without a way to get to the classroom and their teachers.

GAO found evidence of this problem in a 2017 study. The report found that road conditions can be a barrier to attendance and that Department of Education data shows that Native American children have a chronic absence rate that is 9 percent higher than non-Native children.

I ask this Committee, as part of the transportation reauthorization bill, to reauthorize the Indian School Bus Route Maintenance Program and help to get Native American children back in school.

Second, I strongly support this Committee providing a multi-year reauthorization bill that addresses the pending insolvency with the Highway Trust Fund.

In its current state, the Highway Trust Fund will run out of money in 2021, which will force Arizona to severely cut its expenditures and negatively impact its ability to respond to emerging needs in 2022.

A long-term authorization measure will allow Arizona and other states to strategically plan critical infrastructure projects.

I also support bringing back flexibility to Highway Safety Improvement Program Funds. As the law requires, program funds can only be spent on infrastructure construction projects.

However, allowing the funds to be used on education and safety enforcement programs will also help reducing highway injuries and fatalities.

Additionally, I support allowing State highway departments to transfer funds between programs to meet emerging needs. This would give states another tool when meeting budget constraints.

Finally, I would like to express my support for changing the law which prohibits commercial activities on interstates built after January 1, 1960.

This unfair prohibition negatively affects highway systems in Western States more because their highways were developed later in time than in the East.

By fixing this problem Congress puts all States on equal footing and creates another tool to help meet the construction and maintenance needs of rest areas.

Thank you for the time. I look forward to working with this Committee in the future.