

Chairman DeFazio, Ranking Member Graves, Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee about a number of priorities that are important to me and to my constituents.

As the Vice-Chairman of the Transportation, Housing, and Urban Development Appropriations Subcommittee, I believe it is vital that THUD and T&I work together to ensure that America's infrastructure is a driver of economic growth and meets the needs of all our citizens

And I think we'd all agree that we have a lot of work to do to get to that point.

First today, I'd like to strongly endorse President Biden's vision for an infrastructure package that meets massive level of need in our country.

I don't need to tell the members of this committee about the potential benefits of infrastructure investment.

For decades, we have dramatically underinvested in our national infrastructure and I'm grateful that this Committee and this President understand the need to get back on track,

And to ensure that we build the infrastructure we want, not the infrastructure we had.

To that end, I'd like to recommend that the Committee consider establishing a Federal Highway Administration Hazard Mitigation program,

So that we can ensure that federal money is spent on resilient projects that Americans can depend on , regardless of the challenges of a changing climate.

I'd like now to focus in on a couple of often overlooked aspects of infrastructure that I believe are crucial in any bill this committee advances.

First, park districts. In Illinois, park districts are special units of local government that are home not just to outdoor recreation facilities, but to century old buildings and other historic landmarks.

In my city of Chicago, the South Shore Cultural Center is just one great example.

In addition to more than 70 acres that include a golf course, a beach, and open areas, the cultural center building is a historic site that dates back to 1905.

It was even the site of Barack and Michelle Obama's wedding reception in 1992.

Because of their unique mix of outdoor spaces and historic structures, there's no federal funding program that helps support the vital preservation work that park districts do.

I worked with my good friend and T&I committee member, Chuy Garcia last summer to help craft a small but important park district grant program for inclusion in HR 2.

While the provision wasn't included in the bill then, we were grateful that this committee and the Natural Resources Committee agreed to work with us on this issue going forward.

Likewise, I believe it is crucial for the federal government to support important cultural institutions like museums, zoos, and aquariums both during, and as we recover from, the COVID-19 pandemic.

These institutions, located across the country in thousands of cities and towns, represent our cultural heritage and are social, economic, and educational pillars of their communities.

They have faced an unprecedented economic crisis and they need and deserve our support.

I will be sending a letter, alongside Congressman Garcia, to this committee expanding on the need for support for museums, zoos, and aquariums in an infrastructure package and I'd like to work with the Committee on this important issue.

Finally, I'd like to speak about the Federal Bird Safe Buildings Act, which is before this committee.

In fact, I have introduced a version of this bill in every Congress I have been a member of

Because I believe that we have a responsibility to be good stewards of the world we live in.

Up to one billion birds die from colliding into buildings every year, which is a totally preventable problem.

The cost-negligible, bipartisan Bird Safe Buildings Act requires that public buildings constructed, acquired, or significantly altered by GSA incorporate bird-safe building materials and design features.

Birds have an intrinsic cultural, and ecological value and help generate billions of dollars annually to the U.S. economy through wildlife watching activities.

For all these reasons, it's vital that we take the simple, straightforward, and low cost steps in my bill to protect birds from fatal collisions.

This bill has been referred to Chairwoman Titus' subcommittee and I thank her for her support of it in the past.

I urge the committee to quickly consider and pass the Bird Safe Buildings Act so that it can be brought the floor for a vote in the full House.

Chairman Defazio, members of the Committee, thank you for your time today. I look forward to working with the committee going forward and thank you for your good work for the infrastructure of our country.