

Testimony of Congressman Tim Ryan

Transportation & Infrastructure Committee Member Day

Wednesday, April 14, 2021 via WebEx.

Chairman DeFazio, Ranking Member Graves, and Members of the Committee -- thank you for the opportunity to testify before you this morning.

And thank you Chairman DeFazio for your leadership throughout the COVID-19 pandemic and on each of the COVID-19 relief packages we passed. Most recently, the American Rescue Plan that is simply an amazing achievement on behalf of the American people.

As Congress begins its work on transportation and infrastructure, I would like to share some of my priorities within the Committee's jurisdiction.

One of my top priorities is making sure that the Youngstown Warren Regional Airport (YNG) in my district continues to fulfill its essential mission as a key component of the local transportation infrastructure of Northeast Ohio. Market forces in recent years--including the most recent setback to US commercial air service from COVID 19 travel restrictions and health safety concerns--has left this airport in the precarious position of losing its Commercial Service categorization and being reclassified as a general aviation airport, causing the loss of significant dollars intended for community airports under the CARES Act and subsequent programs awards. Additionally, the Youngstown-Warren airport is one of very few airports that serves as home to an active Air Force Reserve Station. This is important because the Airport—regardless of whether it's classified as a

commercial airport or a general aviation airport—is always responsible for maintaining the runways for the Air Force C-130's that use them. It is very costly for the Airport to provide a safely maintained and operational facility for the U.S. Air Force, and the Youngstown-Warren Airport counts on robust Airport Improvement Funds to afford that maintenance. I especially want to thank your committee staff—including Brian Bell, Alex Burkett, Adam Weiss, and Josue Ambriz—for taking the time to meet with my staff and officials from Youngstown-Warren Regional Airport and offering to work with us to get this issue addressed.

President Biden's call to rebuild our crumbling roads and bridges is one that is heard loud and clear in Ohio. Ohio has received a C- grade on its Infrastructure Report Card. We have 1,377 bridges and over 4,925 miles of highways in disrepair.

There is a desperate need for funding towards Ohio's critical means of transportation. One well-known example of infrastructure that needs fixed is the Brent Spence Bridge connecting Covington, Kentucky to Cincinnati, Ohio. This bridge, which is currently carrying double the load it was built for, is critically important to Ohio's economy and Members of Congress and Presidents from both parties have been promising to get it fixed for years. Now is the time to finally get this bridge fixed.

Another example of where we need additional investment is the Appalachian Development Highway System. I urge the Committee to fund the completion of this crucial transportation network throughout Ohio and Appalachia. Completing

this highway system will go a long way toward raising standards of living in this historically impoverished region.

When it comes to how we move across the country, I believe that it's crucial that we increase our efforts to support the production of electric vehicles and electric vehicle charging infrastructure across our country. An investment in this technology is an opportunity for the United States to reclaim its role as a leader in clean technology manufacturing amidst the climate crisis. Manufacturing electric vehicles will also offer good paying jobs to our workers, but only if we invest in them first. With the investments already made here in my district in battery and vehicle production, we can continue to lead the way in supporting clean energy manufacturing.

Turning to other parts of our nation's crumbling infrastructure, I have been a long-time advocate that the federal government must invest in removing dangerous lead pipes across the United States. I am encouraged to see the Biden Administration's Infrastructure plan echoes this goal. This Congress, I've sponsored legislation that would invest \$100 billion dollars to remove every lead pipe in the country. I adamantly believe that every person has a right to clean drinking. We cannot stand by and watch as another generation of America's children are neurologically poisoned by lead pipes. I urge the Committee to make address this crisis.

America's waterways are another area that I want to work with the committee to address. Currently, there is a lack of coordination between the Army Corps of

Engineers and the EPA when it comes to cleaning up polluted rivers. As a result, I have a river in my district—the Mahoning River--in desperate need of federal investment. The entire community wishes to get this river cleaned up and restored to free flowing state but the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is unwilling to help remove contaminated sediment because they are afraid of being sued under the Environmental Protection Agency's CERCLA rules. This interagency paralysis—which has lasted decades—is a shameful example of government bureaucracy at its worst. I urge the Committee to work with me on a fix so we do not leave this contamination in place and so we can turn this waterway into an economic asset for Northeast Ohio.

Lastly, I am thankful that this plan has put jobs and rebuilding our American workforce front in center for how we accomplish these important priorities. Ohio's workers helped build this country to what it is today, and they stand ready to build the infrastructure that will be funded by this Committee. That is why we must maintain strong Buy America protections, and I strongly encourage the Committee to prioritize policies that ensure America's workers build America's infrastructure. Doing so is an investment in the quality of life of those not only for my constituents in Ohio, but for all across the nation.

Mr. Chair, I look forward to working with you, with your staff, and across the aisle to make sure we address the issues outlined here today.

Again, thank you for your steadfast leadership and attention to these important issues.