Testimony of Congresswoman Mary Gay Scanlon
Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure Members' Day Hearing

Chairman DeFazio, Ranking Member Graves, and the entire committee—thank you for providing your colleagues with the opportunity to voice our infrastructure priorities as you all begin working on this year's surface transportation reauthorization bill and the American Jobs Plan.

In the months ahead, Congress has a once in a generation opportunity to fix, modernize, and reimagine our infrastructure systems to address today's shortcomings and tomorrow's needs. We have aging transportation networks, fragile electric grids, and a shamefully lacking water infrastructure that leaves an unacceptably high number of Americans without clean drinking water or adequate sewage systems. And, all of this is happening in the greater context of the climate crisis, where on one hand, our infrastructure remains vulnerable to climate change, and on the other, smart investments in our infrastructure will allow for emissions reductions and greater climate resiliency. So, as you consider these problems and the bold solutions necessary to address them, I ask that you please consider the needs of my district.

I represent Pennsylvania's Fifth Congressional district, which includes parts of Philadelphia and its suburbs, and much of the city's infrastructure network. My district includes Philadelphia's airport, port, rail yard, and, as a key part of the northeast corridor, dozens of miles of highways and passenger rail lines. PA-5 also includes much of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority's transit network, which operates multiple commuter and light rail lines that link Philadelphia and its suburbs.

The problems facing my district's infrastructure system are not that different from those of similar northeast cities—everything is old, heavily used, and transportation authorities don't have nearly enough money to meet their maintenance needs. For decades, Congress allowed this underfunding to persist, so that now the greater Philadelphia area has billions of dollars in maintenance backlogs, Which in turn prevent investment in modernization, expansion, or other improvements, as every dollar is stretched thin to keep the whole network functioning.

The Pennsylvania Department of Transportation spends about $9 billion a year, and yet this only meets about half the Commonwealth's maintenance, modernization, and upgrade needs. My region's MPO—the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission—estimates that the Philadelphia region will need $130 billion over the next 25 years to bring the system to a state of good repair. And, SEPTA has a $5 billion maintenance backlog with a $640 million annual capital budget. This lack of funding is unsustainable, and that is why it is so important for Congress to get these infrastructure bills right.

With the right amount of funding, and with a commitment to forward-thinking, long-term investments, we can provide the foundation for robust economic growth in the 21st Century. The fixes, upgrades, and expansions that federal dollars will facilitate will translate directly into jobs and economic activity, as well as less traffic, better road safety, and cleaner air and water.

And so, if there's one thing you take away from my testimony today, it's that your committee leads the way in providing robust, comprehensive funding to meet the country's infrastructure needs. We need funding for backlogs, new projects, climate change mitigation, and road safety; funding for airports, ports, and multimodal connections to ensure reliable, low-cost supply chains for businesses and manufacturers; and funding for Amtrak to improve passenger rail service and explore opportunities for high-speed rail. The possibilities for our country are endless; we need only the imagination to realize these ambitious goals.

As you continue to develop these important infrastructure bills, please keep these concerns in mind. Thank you all again for holding this hearing and allowing me to share my district's priorities with you.