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COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS
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COMMITTEE ON SMALL BUSINESS
SUBCOMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC GROWTH, TAX
AND CAPITAL ACCESS

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-1310

May 17, 2019

The Honorable Peter DeFazio
Chairman
House Committee on Transportation
and Infrastructure
2165 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Sam Graves
Ranking Member
House Committee on Transportation
and Infrastructure
2165 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman DeFazio and Ranking Member Graves:

Thank you for your continued leadership on the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee. The need for significant federal investment in infrastructure is undeniable. I hope to bring to your attention the infrastructure and transportation priorities of my district as you consider relevant legislation.

When I talk with my constituents about infrastructure, we focus on two key priorities: that our investment must be comprehensive, and that it must be resilient. Infrastructure to my district means more than roads and bridges — and any federal infrastructure package must start with a comprehensive approach. This includes expanding network connectivity, bringing our ports into the 21st century, strengthening community institutions like schools and hospitals, updating water infrastructure such as wastewater and drinking water treatment, and supporting public transit.

An example in my district that combines these two themes is stormwater management. My district has faced two “hundred year” floods in the past 14 years, and the Des Plaines River grew above its flood stage six times last year. Our communities have made significant investment in flood mitigation in recent years, but climate change will continue to challenge the capacity of our stormwater management. FEMA estimates that for every dollar invested in flood mitigation, there are four dollars of public benefits, underscoring how investments in mitigation pay dividends down the road—all the more important as climate change deepens its impact. As your committee looks at prospective infrastructure legislation, I urge you to consider the impacts of climate change and building climate-resiliency into our infrastructure investments, including the adoption of green infrastructure and on-site flood mitigation. We must ensure the investments we make can handle the needs of the decades to come, from strains on our grid like heat-driven electrical demand to the challenges presented by increased severe weather events.

The reauthorization of surface transportation legislation also serves as an opportunity to double down on our investments in public transportation. First, we need to shore up the Highway Trust Fund (HTF) to ensure its long-term health. A 2017 survey in my district highlighted transportation infrastructure as a top concern for my constituents, with 70% of Lake County residents surveyed saying it was their number one issue. The HTF remains a critical resource for ensuring the safety and maintenance of our transportation arteries. I also believe we must continue robust federal support for public transit. Both commuter rail and bus networks in my district have expanded service in recent years, highlighting that there continues to be growing demand for public transportation—and underscoring how important the federal cost-share is.

I have heard from transit stakeholders in my district about how the backlog within the State of Good Repair program is affecting them. Public transportation in my district would greatly benefit from funding increases for this and the Capital Investment Grant programs, both of which are critical funding sources in my community. I also believe Congress has a role in helping local transit agencies shoulder the cost of implementing, operating, and maintaining Positive Train Control, which plays a central role in ensuring passenger safety. Finally, I encourage the Committee to support and integrate biking and pedestrian infrastructure to make our communities more accessible for all modes of transportation.

Thank you for your consideration of these priorities. I look forward to working with you on these and other pressing legislation.

Sincerely,



Bradley S. Schneider
Member of Congress