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ENERGY AND COMMERCE

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Chairman DeFazio and Ranking Member Graves,

Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony in advance of the committee's work to reauthorize surface transportation policy. Historically, thanks to the leadership in this committee, transportation and infrastructure have been bipartisan issues. There are those that would choose to break that tradition this Congress. I hope this committee and the 117th Congress continue to value bringing members together from both sides of the aisle on our transportation and infrastructure needs. This could be the uniting moment our President has talked about.

The President's plan is a great foundation that goes boldly towards rebuilding American infrastructure for the 21st Century. But the absence of a long-term sustainable funding source for the Highway Trust Fund is deeply concerning.

I would also like to commend the Committee's past work. In particular, the robust Projects of National and Regional Significance program in the Moving Forward Act that would help states complete large infrastructure projects, like the I-205 bridge and access improvements project in my district. This project has bipartisan, regional support and the local communities and state are committed to funding support. It is a critical connection point that sees hours-long traffic congestion, not only for Oregonians but also for our neighbors across the river in Washington. The state and local officials have put forward an ambitious plan to reinforce the bridge for seismic concerns to maintain access during major disasters. I hope that programs like this one are kept inside the base package, allowing states to compete for greatly needed federal assistance on big projects that they can't do on their own.

Bringing Members back into the discussion about how best to spend federal dollars in their district is long overdue and I applaud the committee for their efforts here. We all know our districts better than agency bureaucrats here in DC. The safeguards being put in place by the committee will help bring needed transparency to the process while empowering us to advocate for the projects our constituents tell us are most needed. Projects like the Interstate 5 bottleneck at the Aurora-Donald interchange and the dangerous intersection on Highway 22 and Highway 51 in my district. These projects, like so many others, have broad support from local and state officials. The only thing it's missing is some federal help to finalize funding. These are the kinds of projects that just need a little focus that will help save lives and keep our economy humming.

I also hope that this is expanded beyond surface projects to include other forms of infrastructure. The south jetty at the entrance to Tillamook Bay is in critical need of repairs to stop the loss of life from boats exiting and entering the port of Garibaldi. We recently had a boat capsize leading to the deaths of two.

These jetties are federal responsibility. But the past decade has seen these project zeroed out in presidential budgets due to the cost. It will only get worse for my constituents because of federal inaction so I urge the committee to expand opportunities for Congress to direct spending for critical projects like this one.

Thank you again for this opportunity to outline my thoughts as the committee continues its important work. I look forward to seeing a final product that meets the moment and provides a strong investment in our country and our citizens.

KURT SCHRADER
Member of Congress