

conor lamb

17th District, Pennsylvania

House Committee on Veterans' Affairs
Vice Chair
Subcommittee on Health
Subcommittee on Technology Modernization

House Committee on Science, Space
& Technology
Subcommittee on Energy
Subcommittee on Environment

House Committee on Transportation
& Infrastructure
Subcommittee on Railroads, Pipelines,
and Hazardous Materials
Subcommittee on Coast Guard
and Maritime Transportation



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April 3, 2020

The Honorable Peter DeFazio
Chairman
House Transportation & Infrastructure
Committee
2251 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Eleanor Holmes Norton
Chairwoman
House Subcommittee on Highways &
Transit
2251 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman DeFazio and Chairwoman Norton,

I appreciate the opportunity to provide my priorities on behalf of Pennsylvania's 17th Congressional District for your consideration as you draft legislation to reauthorize the Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act (FAST Act). My top priority is working with you as a Member of the Transportation & Infrastructure Committee to develop a comprehensive, bipartisan, on-time, and long-term infrastructure package addressing the serious surface transportation deficiencies affecting my constituents in southwestern Pennsylvania every day. I also urge you to consider the specific priorities outlined below as you develop this critical legislation, which focus on job creation and economic development; the most important federal transportation and infrastructure programs for my state and district; reducing transit-connected environmental impacts; and innovation and safety. Now more than ever in the face of COVID-19, our communities could benefit from this legislation and the economic opportunity it would deliver. Thank you for your consideration, and I look forward to partnering with you.

American Job Creation and Economic Development

Buy and Hire American

First and foremost, this reauthorization should position us to make use of our well-trained workforce, create additional good-paying American jobs, and spur economic development within and beyond my district. Southwestern Pennsylvania has historically been home to some of the nation's most skilled workers in the building trades. The region I represent produced raw materials, including steel, that built this country, and it birthed the labor movement providing dignity and fairness for workers too. I support the inclusion of strong Buy and Hire America provisions in the FAST Act reauthorization—including H.R. 2755 the Buy America 2.0 Act. This promotes the use of high-quality American made steel, iron, and other manufactured goods used for transportation and infrastructure projects.

Prohibitions enacted under the National Defense Authorization Act of 2019 on transit agencies awarding contracts to state-owned and controlled rail and bus companies should be maintained

as well. These provisions ensure that when the federal government invests in infrastructure—we also invest in American workers and their communities instead of sending tax dollars unnecessarily overseas. As Chairman of the bipartisan Steel Caucus, I have seen lower-priced and lower-quality foreign competitors, who benefit from state subsidies and lax regulatory requirements, attempt to undercut American companies. I urge safeguards against this.

Support for the Transportation & Infrastructure Workforce

We must also strengthen the pipeline of skilled workers needed to build and maintain our infrastructure. Many existing workers in the building trades are at or nearing retirement, and too few young people are beginning careers in these sectors behind them. The Brookings Institution predicts that 3 million additional infrastructure workers will be needed in the next decade. Many of these jobs do not require a bachelor's degree, but extensive on-the-job training. I believe additional investments in Career and Technical Education (CTE) in our K-12 system can encourage more young people to consider careers in the building trades. Expanding access to Department of Labor (DOL) registered apprenticeship programs would be another promising strategy. Ensuring we make best use of the related training and skills our service members have when they return home and transition back into civilian life presents another opportunity for filling workforce shortages. This is outlined in my bipartisan bill, the Military Learning for Credit Act. I encourage partnering with the Department of Veterans' Affairs on veterans' hiring preference programs related to our transportation and infrastructure workforce too.

The best way to attract and maintain our infrastructure workforce is to protect the wages and working conditions of our workers. This can be achieved through enforcement of the Davis Bacon Act that ensures publicly-funded projects pay workers the prevailing wage in a sector. Another simple way to support workers would be to include H.R. 2103 the bipartisan Tax Fairness for Workers Act, which would reinstate itemized tax deductions for work-related, unreimbursed costs workers incur as part of their job, from union dues to uniforms, tools, and per diems for truck drivers.

Programs Pennsylvanians Most Rely On **Roads**

Another critical issue is focusing specifically on Pennsylvanians' needs—including making sure we get our fair share of federal formula funding and that the most oversubscribed federal programs utilized in my state and district are well funded. Many of our interstates were constructed over 50 years ago, and struggle to meet current capacity needs, increasing traffic and safety concerns. Pittsburgh's Parkway West, for example, has one of the most congested bottlenecks nationally, and the \$200 million project to address this at the Green Tree and Carnegie interchanges in my district has been delayed for years due to lack of stable, dedicated funding. Additionally, the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT) plans to shift \$3.15 billion over the next nine years to the interstate highway system. This will mean that these funds are diverted away from desperately needed local road paving and maintenance projects. Given that the shift is in part due to inadequate federal funding, I urge robust funding for the Interstate Highway System, including through formula programs such as the National Highway Performance Program. I also support the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC), including funding for the Appalachian Development Highway System (ADHS), and urge changes to

ensure Pennsylvania is able to submit current projects for review and benefit from this program the way other Appalachian states can.

Public Transportation

Federal support for public transportation plays an important role in my district as well. Access to buses and light rail in PA-17 reduces congestion and pollution, while making sure my constituents can still work even if they do not own a car. The Capital Investment Grants (CIG) program has been an important source of funds in particular. For example, the Port Authority of Allegheny County has applied for CIG Small Starts funds to realize its Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system, which would connect two of the region's biggest concentrated job centers where many of my constituents work, Oakland and Downtown Pittsburgh. The project would give bus riders a dedicated bus-only lane and traffic signal prioritization, cutting commute times and ensuring that our transportation system makes it easier for individuals to get to their jobs. The Port Authority is also investing in environmentally friendly electric busses, and I support incentives for this transition as well through the Federal Transit Administration's (FTA) Low or No Emission Bus Program.

All three counties in my district, Beaver, Butler, and Allegheny Counties rely on funding the Bus and Bus Facilities Grant Program, as well as funding from both the Formula Grants for Rural Areas Program and the Urbanized Area Formula Grants Program. The Beaver County Transit Authority (BCTA) has also purchased and plans to purchase additional busses that run on compressed natural gas (CNG), and accordingly I support maintaining the Alternative Fuel Tax Credits program available to them that supports the transition to cleaner transportation fuels.

I have also been alarmed by reports of abuse and assaults on bus drivers and transit workers, and therefore urge the inclusion of H.R. 1139, the Transit Worker and Pedestrian Protection Act as well.

Bridges

Pittsburgh has been called the "City of Bridges." Unfortunately, however, many of our bridges remain structurally deficient, despite encouraging and concentrated efforts to improve conditions. Pennsylvania has the second highest number of structurally deficient bridges in the country, including 288 in PA-17, per the American Road and Transportation Builders Association. Therefore, I support the creation of a new grant program to repair structurally deficient bridges, which was included in S. 2302, America's Transportation Infrastructure Act of 2019. I urge similar language in the House bill. Additionally, I support increasing the off-system bridge set-aside within the Surface Transportation Block Grant Program (STBGP). Finally, I support language promoting corrosion protection systems for bridge infrastructure, to ensure that our bridges are properly designed, built, and maintained and to mitigate the adverse effects of corrosion, control lifecycle bridge costs, and uphold public safety.

Rail

Southwestern Pennsylvania is also home to an extensive network of railroad lines, including Class I railroads, short lines, and Amtrak service. This network has been instrumental in transporting goods and people that fuel our economy to and from the region. I support the inclusion of rail in the surface transportation reauthorization, including increased funds for the

Highway Safety Improvement Program, Section 130, which ensures funding for safety improvements that reduce accidents at rail grade crossings. Additionally, since 2019 Amtrak has required customers, often unwittingly, to enter into forced arbitration agreements as a condition of purchasing an Amtrak ticket. Customers and the public should be able to hold Amtrak accountable in a public forum, and therefore, I urge the committee to include my bill H.R. 6101 the Ending Passenger Rail Forced Arbitration Act.

Commonly Subscribed Infrastructure Grant Programs

The Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) and Infrastructure for Rebuilding America (INFRA) grant programs have been instrumental in meeting transportation and infrastructure needs in my district. The Allegheny County Airport Authority's successful \$18.7 million BUILD grant award in 2019 will allow them to increase cargo operations and related jobs in southwestern Pennsylvania. I have seen compelling project proposals from other district stakeholders as well, including the "Monaca Gateway" BUILD grant application to prepare State Route 18 for massive energy and manufacturing growth in Beaver County. The "Gateway 228" INFRA grant application would have leveraged federal funds for the final segment of the 26-mile freight and commuter corridor in Butler County that links several growing economic activity centers with our waterway ports. Robust funding for the BUILD and INFRA grant programs is essential to the success of projects like these. I also support the inclusion of H.R. 6184 the INFRA Transparency Act, to increase transparency on the scoring of INFRA project applications.

Reducing Transportation-Connected Environmental Impacts

I appreciate that the Moving Forward Democratic Infrastructure Framework as well as the Senate's surface transportation reauthorization bill, S. 2302, America's Transportation Infrastructure Act of 2019, each highlight climate change and the need for more resilient infrastructure in the face of it. According to a 2017 Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) report, the transportation sector is the largest source of greenhouse gas emissions in the United States.

Reducing Transportation-Connected Emissions

As a Member of the House Science, Space, and Technology Committee and Energy Subcommittee, I have been vocal on the need to protect both jobs and our planet at the same time. We are fortunate to have a Department of Energy National Lab in southwestern Pennsylvania. I support the Department of Energy's Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy (EERA), where the Vehicle Technologies Office supports early-stage research that U.S. industry can then use to develop lighter-weight structural and powertrain materials to improve the fuel economy of vehicles and trucks.

Landslides

Climate change has been linked to a higher number of and more extreme weather events, especially flooding in my region. As a result of flooding, southwestern Pennsylvania has experienced severe landslides in recent years. Local reports from PennDOT indicate at least 100-120 landslides in southwestern, Pennsylvania, including one that Chairman DeFazio (D-OR) saw the aftermath of during his visit to Pittsburgh last year. There is no dedicated federal funding source designed to help states and localities prevent areas at risk of landslides. As a

result, I encourage any section focused on climate change and resiliency in the subcommittee's forthcoming legislation include a program for landslide prevention efforts.

Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ)

Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) program funding plays an important role in PA-17. The region, especially Allegheny County, continues to struggle with air quality concerns. Research from New York University (NYU) indicates that relative to its population size and the prevalence of ozone and particulate matter damaging air quality here, Pennsylvania is not getting its fair share of CMAQ formula funding. The CMAQ program was designed to foster surface transportation projects that improve air quality, and I support a formula adjustment to ensure CMAQ funds go to the most-deserving areas.

Transportation Alternative Program (TAP)

Finally, I encourage you to continue the subcommittee's strong support for the Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP), which allows for the construction and maintenance of sidewalks, bike lanes, and trails. I have met with the Rails to Trails Conservancy in my district and remain impressed with their commitment to preserving the natural environment and facilitating active transportation options. I support the inclusion of H.R. 5696, the Connecting America's Active Transportation System Act too, as this would support the ongoing Allegheny Green Web initiative to better connect trails in my district with each other and with access to public transportation.

Research, Innovation, and Driving us Forward

At the beginning of this letter I mentioned southwestern Pennsylvania's proud history of building the infrastructure of our past. I am ending this letter with a nod to the region's bright future—where we have and will continue harnessing innovation and technological advances to drive this country forward.

University Transportation Centers Program

The University Transportation Centers (UTC) program brings a consortium of two- and four-year colleges together to conduct cutting edge research on transportation technology, developing our transportation workforce, and accelerating technology transfer. In Pittsburgh, Carnegie Mellon University in partnership with the University of Pennsylvania, Ohio State University, and the Community College of Allegheny County, are home to a UTC, Mobility21. One of their projects focuses on reducing barriers to employment—including finding the transportation needed to get there. They have piloted the use of subsidized rideshare credits to help low-income individuals in areas lacking public transit access and are researching its impact on their lives. I support UTCs and their continued efforts to leverage technology to improve safety, efficiency, and mobility.

Smart Cities

Similarly, I support past Department of Transportation (DOT) initiatives such as the Smart City Challenge. This challenge invited mid-sized cities to think creatively about using advanced technology and data to tackle transportation challenges. Pittsburgh was one of seven finalists and used related DOT funds to pilot smart traffic lights to reduce idling, resulting emissions, and unnecessary time for drivers spent waiting at stop lights.

Autonomous Vehicles

Southwestern Pennsylvania is also well-positioned to lead the way on autonomous vehicle testing and adoption. Five companies and counting have emerged in this industry so far here. I support the Automated Driving System Demonstration Grant program, which allow areas like mine to continue research on the safe integration of automated driving systems.

Safety

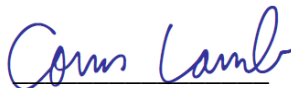
I support federal efforts to reduce the number of transportation related fatalities and injuries under the Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP), including a focus on non-motorized users like pedestrians and cyclists more likely to be killed in an accident. I also urge better safety data collection that also accounts for injuries in addition to fatalities, which would result in improved safety planning.

Research for Highway Trust Fund Sustainability Options

Finally, I support continued research investment into viable financing options to ensure the solvency and sustainability of the Highway Trust Fund. This includes supporting research into the eventual adoption of a vehicle miles traveled (VMT) fee, which is ongoing in Pennsylvania.

Thank you again for the opportunity to outline my priorities regarding legislation to reauthorize our surface transportation programs. I am committed to working with our counterparts on the Ways & Means Committee, our colleagues across the aisle, and the Administration to best determine how we can pay for an infrastructure package as well. I look forward to continuing to work with you and the Transportation & Infrastructure Committee on much needed transportation and infrastructure investments as the newest Member of the committee.

Sincerely,



Conor Lamb
Member of Congress