

CONOR LAMB

17TH DISTRICT, PENNSYLVANIA

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS

SUBCOMMITTEE ON HEALTH

SUBCOMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND INVESTIGATIONS

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE, SPACE  
& TECHNOLOGY

SUBCOMMITTEE ON ENERGY

SUBCOMMITTEE ON RESEARCH AND TECHNOLOGY

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION  
& INFRASTRUCTURE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON AVIATION

SUBCOMMITTEE ON HIGHWAYS AND TRANSIT



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April 14, 2021

The Honorable Peter A. DeFazio  
Chair  
Committee on Transportation and  
Infrastructure  
U.S. House of Representatives  
2165 Rayburn Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Sam Graves  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Transportation and  
Infrastructure  
U.S. House of Representatives  
2164 Rayburn Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Eleanor Holmes Norton  
Chair  
Subcommittee on Highways and  
Transit Subcommittee on Highways and  
Committee on Transportation and  
Infrastructure  
2165 Rayburn Office Building  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Rodney Davis  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Highways and  
Transit  
Committee on Transportation and  
Infrastructure  
2164 Rayburn Office Building  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman DeFazio, Ranking Member Graves, Chairwoman Norton, and Ranking Member Davis,

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 our nation's surface transportation programs. 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 western 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 as we recover and rebuild from 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. Western 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 surface transportation legislation. I am especially grateful to the committee for passing several of the Buy America amendments I offered during the mark up of H.R. 2 last Congress, which strengthened the domestic steel industry by requiring mill certifications for bus shells to certify that they are made with domestic steel, ensuring imported buses cannot get Buy America domestic credit, and closing loopholes in the accounting of domestic labor costs. These amendments and tight Buy America language promote 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 and included in H.R. 2 last Congress, 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.

Lastly, COVID-19 has laid bare significant shortcomings in our domestic supply chains, from PPE and masks earlier in the pandemic to items like semiconductors needed in the automotive sector that we still have a shortage of now. It is not an inevitability that we must import items critical to our national security—we can and we should bolster efforts to manufacture these items at home. As the Transportation & Infrastructure Committee has jurisdiction over the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), I urge consideration of efforts to re-shore domestic manufacturing and re-strengthen our domestic supply chains as the committee develops its infrastructure package. A bill I co-led with former committee member Rep. Finkenauer (D-IA) last Congress and am preparing for reintroduction, H.R. 8785, that creates a framework for strengthening critical domestic supply chains, would be a good place to start.

### **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, which was outlined in H.R. 447, the National Apprenticeship Act, which passed the

House with bipartisan support earlier this year. Ensuring we make the 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.

The best way to attract and maintain our infrastructure workforce is to protect the wages and working conditions of 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 my bill, 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—which has garnered support from the trucking community.

### **Programs Pennsylvanians Most Rely On**

Thank you for working to deliver urgently needed relief to the transportation and infrastructure sectors across the country and in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, as this sector was significantly impacted by the pandemic. The lifelines provided to transit agencies, the Pennsylvania State Department of Transportation (PennDOT), the motorcoach industry, and non-surface stakeholders like our airport saved livelihoods and families during this unprecedented time. Nevertheless, despite the substantial support from Congress, stakeholders in the Commonwealth, especially PennDOT, have a long road to financial recovery ahead.

PennDOT lost nearly \$600 million due to COVID-19 and cancelled or postponed several planned projects in my district. In light of this, I have led multiple bipartisan letters advocating for additional, direct relief to state Departments of Transportation (DOTs) to help them recover from COVID-19, and will be introducing a related bill, the PAVE Act, on this issue too. While Congress thankfully provided a \$10 billion down payment to state DOTs in H.R. 133 last Congress, an \$18 billion shortfall from COVID-19 remains. Failure to support State DOTs at this critical juncture would mitigate the full effectiveness an infrastructure package could have.

### **Roads**

Beyond COVID-19 recovery, another critical issue is focusing specifically on Pennsylvanians' general infrastructure 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. PennDOT has indicated that it only has \$6.9 billion of the \$15 billion it needs every year to properly maintain the state's roads and bridges, pointing to significant financial challenges even before COVID-19 compounded them. Given that this need 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 will connect two of the region's biggest concentrated job centers where many of my constituents work, Oakland and Downtown Pittsburgh. The project will 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 accompanying electric vehicle charging stations, 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 rely on funding from 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 support the transition to cleaner transportation fuels.

I also support the committee providing targeted support for public transit agencies to expand their routes and place additional bus stops, especially to facilitate access to community college campuses, an issue outlined in the SHSF Public Transit Map report.

Our transit workers have put themselves and their families at risk to ensure their fellow Americans could get to their jobs or doctor's appointments throughout the pandemic. We must make sure that our transit workers are properly outfitted with PPE, sick leave, and access to COVID-19 vaccines as we continue recovering from the pandemic, and I appreciate you drawing attention to these needs during the hearing, "Protecting Transportation Workers and Passengers from COVID-19" earlier this year. I have also been alarmed by reports of abuse and assaults on bus drivers and transit workers that were prevalent even before the pandemic, and therefore urge the inclusion of 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 230 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. 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**

Western Pennsylvania is also home to an extensive network of railroad lines, including Class I railroads, short lines, and Amtrak service as well as several businesses in the rail supply chain. 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 my, the Ending Passenger Rail Forced Arbitration Act, too, as it did last Congress in H.R. 2. Finally, I appreciate the committee inviting Wabtec to its hearing earlier this year on, “The Business Case for Climate Solutions.” During the hearing, we learned about the possibility of a Freight Rail Innovation Institute (FRII), where the U.S. government, private sector, and higher education institutions could partner to accelerate the development of hydrogen fuel cell locomotives and rail technologies. I support language to help realize this vision in the surface transportation reauthorization bill.

## **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 has allowed them to increase cargo operations and related jobs in western Pennsylvania. The 2020 “Gateway 228” BUILD grant to Butler County in my district will leverage \$25 million in federal funds for the final segment of the 26-mile freight and commuter corridor in the County that links several growing economic activity centers. I have seen other compelling project proposals from 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. Robust funding for the BUILD and INFRA grant programs is essential to the success of projects like these.

In light of COVID-19’s impact on the aviation sector, I also urge consideration of language to ensure multimodal airport projects, including those at Pittsburgh International Airport (PIT) are eligible under the Transportation Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (TIFA) program, as outlined in the TIFIA for Airports Act.

## **PA-17 Member-Designated Projects**

At the time of writing, I am finalizing vetting of the Member-Designated Projects submitted from Pennsylvania’s 17th Congressional District. From bridge repairs, to public transportation facility improvements, to long-overdue road paving work, I am excited to deliver infrastructure projects that will improve my constituents’ lives and commutes while creating good-paying jobs.

### **Reducing Transportation-Connected Environmental Impacts**

I appreciate the committee's work to highlight climate change and the need for more resilient infrastructure in the face of it. According to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), 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, western 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 saw the aftermath of during his past visit to Pittsburgh. 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. I thank the committee for accepting my amendment to allow landslide mitigation as an eligible use of funds in H.R. 2's pre-disaster mitigation program previously and encourage you to do the same this Congress.

### **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**

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 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 western 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 (AVs)**

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. I thank the committee for accepting my amendment last Congress to H.R. 2 that added AV developers, alongside manufacturers, to the AV working group established under the bill and urge similar consideration again.

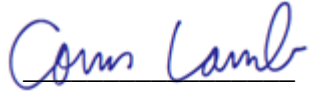
## **Safety**

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.

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 who I work with regularly as co-chair of the Problem Solvers Caucus Infrastructure Working Group, with the Biden Administration,

and with all of our colleagues on the Transportation & Infrastructure Committee to craft and pass this much needed infrastructure package.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Conor Lamb". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Conor Lamb  
Conor Lamb  
Member of Congress