



AMERICAN PUBLIC WORKS ASSOCIATION

**Your Comprehensive
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1200 Main Street, Suite 1400
Kansas City, MO 64105-2100
816-472-6100 800-848-2792
fax 816-472-1610

25 Massachusetts Ave NW
Suite 500A
Washington, DC 20001
202-408-9541

Testimony of Dominick A. Longobardi
Legislative Hearing on H.R. 573, H.R. 4503 and H.R.4776
September 10, 2025

PRESIDENT
Vic Bienes, P.E.

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
Scott D. Grayson, CAE



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Good morning, Chairman Westerman, Ranking Member Huffman, and Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify. My name is Dominick Longobardi, and I am the Deputy Town Comptroller and Director of Purchasing for the Town of Hempstead, NY, America's largest township. I am also the former Mayor of the full-service Village of Floral Park, NY and serve on the Board of Directors of the Water Authority of Western Nassau County on Long Island, as Chairman of the Greater Long Island Clean Cities Coalition, a program under the US Department of Energy, and the President of the Board of the Town of Hempstead Employees Federal Credit Union. I am also proud to have served as President of the American Public Works Association for 2024-2025, representing our members.

APWA serves all aspects of public works which sets us apart from other associations. Our members serve in the public and private sectors at all levels of government, providing expertise at the local, state and federal government levels. Working in the public interest, our members plan, design, build, operate and maintain our transportation infrastructure and networks, water supply and wastewater treatment systems, stormwater management, drainage and flood control infrastructure, waste and refuse disposal systems, public buildings and grounds, as well as providing emergency planning, response, and recovery.

On behalf of APWA, I would like to express our gratitude for the reforms already adopted since we last testified before this committee. The changes initially proposed through the BUILDER Act and finalized as part of the Fiscal Responsibility Act are critical to creating a more coordinated permitting process. Extending "One Federal Decision" to all infrastructure projects is delivering a more predictable, transparent, and timely federal review and authorization process. These commonsense reforms, like joint review schedules with time and page limits that allow for flexibility depending on project complexity, builds on prior successful work in the Fixing America's Surface Transportation or FAST Act and the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act. APWA sees the SPEED Act as a logical progression of this work.

The National Environmental Policy Act or NEPA is important to public works because it serves as the framework that allows us to undertake vital infrastructure projects while also protecting the environment we live and work in. Since its enactment, NEPA has become integrated into every part of the planning, design, and construction of infrastructure. When I was Mayor, my community was part of a project that involved the \$2.5 billion dollar expansion of an 11-mile stretch of the third track of the Long Island Railroad, the major commuter line for Long Islanders to get to NYC for work, etc. This railroad runs right through the heart of our village, and this project created a major upheaval in daily life for most in my community. Because of its scope, the project was subject to NEPA and New York's State Environmental Quality Review (SEQR) requirements, among others.

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As both the Mayor and a public works professional, I was involved in multiagency and stakeholder coordination and collaboration and project planning and execution. Early on, I saw that cross government communication and managing expectations regarding project timelines was key to minimizing the project's impact on the residents' quality of life. Streamlining is not always about minimizing paperwork. As a cooperating entity, early engagement with local governments is an important part of streamlining the NEPA process. With the LIRR Third Track project, that communication is paramount. No group can better speak about the impact a project may have on roadways, waterlines, or emergency systems as the public works professionals who do this work on a daily basis. Protecting a framework that incorporates the institutional knowledge of local experts, such as public works professionals, ensures that a project can be implemented quickly, with community buy in, minimizing the chance of litigation, and enhancing the quality of life we all work hard for and cherish.

Another opportunity I see to improve the NEPA process is by eliminating duplicate work. As I mentioned, the rail project was subject to both state and federal environmental review. The NYS environmental review process closely mirrors NEPA and can be just as burdensome and overbearing. Coordinating overlapping environmental review processes on various government levels takes time, energy, and money. APWA members have seen project costs increase by 25% once federal funding is added. This is due to the additional administrative burdens placed on local governments, project design professionals, contractors, and inspectors throughout the process. Administrative requirements should not be the barrier that prevents communities from upgrading and maintaining their infrastructure, nor should they cause unnecessary and expensive delays. By allowing a functionally similar state process to substitute for a federal one, such as what is proposed in the SPEED Act, less resourced communities may be more inclined to take on a new project, knowing the additional burdens will not be there.

And this is starting to happen. The most recent permitting reforms combined with federal investment from the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), have encouraged more communities to take on their list of deferred infrastructure maintenance projects, and, in some cases, pursue full replacements of aging critical infrastructure they otherwise could not afford to do. However, the longer it takes for construction on a project to start, the higher the cost for labor and materials. I equate major projects to the same thing as redoing your kitchen at home, the longer you wait, the more it costs. Over time, new requirements, such as updated building codes and changing regulatory requirements, increase project costs. The longer you wait to start, the more you will pay for materials and labor.

I was further out on Long Island over Labor Day weekend and in the Town of Southold headed into the Village of Greenport along Route 25A, there is a reconstruction project funded by IIJA just starting. As I was driving through, there was a big sign saying that the project was funded by the IIJA and I was thinking... how long did it take this project to get approved, how long did it take for them to get their permits, that money was authorized years ago.

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There is no doubt, at the current cost of materials such as asphalt, etc., that this project has seen major cost increases because of the *later* start. This is a perfect example that shows if IJA funding is not extended or reauthorized, this project and others like it may not make it across the finish line because they will no longer have the money needed to do the work and the years spent acquiring federal permits will *truly* have been wasted.

Conversely, we recently had coinciding gas and water main replacement projects. This was a major project that required complete road replacement on any road opened by a utility. By working together early and often with the gas utility, Water Authority, and my Village not only did everyone get new mains, but they also got new roads and major savings *estimated at \$1.5 - \$2 million* on maintenance of the old system and roads. Strong collaboration and communication enhanced this project and ensured that those affected understood the reason why the projects were required to be done in a certain way and kept focus on the important and necessary aspects of the project.

Unfortunately, as I am sure you can all relate to a story from a project within your Congressional districts, a “simple” permit issue is never simple and it takes hours, if not days, to get the answer. Public works professionals deal with this every day and sometimes take the brunt of frustration. One permit being delayed can push back a project timeline by months, and lead to missed or lost revenue from lack of available project usage.

While there has been a vast improvement in overall project timeframes, delays are still hampering communities from completing critical infrastructure projects that will improve public health and safety. Then, there is always the fear of a lawsuit. While most public works projects do not trigger litigation, communities may be discouraged from taking on large, more complex projects, such as a new water treatment system or rerouting a major roadway, that are required to prevent the failure of critical aging infrastructure and support growing communities. While larger, better resourced municipalities may be able to afford sufficient legal representation, smaller ones may not and instead choose not to take on major but necessary projects. The SPEED Act, if enacted, will maintain the opportunity for legal recourse, if necessary, but ensures that if a project requires judicial review, that process does not languish in the courts.

As a representative of practitioners responsible for a diverse array of infrastructure, APWA believes the SPEED Act is a sincere attempt to continue streamlining efforts and supports the provisions in the bill that:

- Define “reasonably foreseeable” as being in the area directly affected by the major Federal action, directly under the control of the agency, and having a reasonably close causal relationship between a change in the environment and the project.
- Ensures project comments are directly related to the proposed action and are within the scope of agency jurisdiction and limit the standing for civil action to those who have substantively participated in that public comment period.

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- Establishes a statute of limitations for NEPA cases in line with other environmental laws and creates maximum timelines for judicial review.

Thank you again for holding this hearing and your continued work on permitting. We are grateful for the opportunity to submit this statement and APWA remains committed to assisting you and Congress as you progress on these reforms.

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