

**Statement of Emily Domenech
Executive Director
Federal Permitting Improvement Steering Council**

**House Committee on Natural Resources
Subcommittee on Energy and Mineral Resources**

**Legislative Hearing on H.R. 8003 “*Expanding the Fast Track Act of 2026*”, H.R. 9646
“*Quantum-Enhanced Critical Minerals Mapping Act of 2026*”, and H.R. 9640 “*Earth MRI
Reauthorization Act of 2026*”**

July 21, 2026

Chairman Stauber, Ranking Member Ansari, and distinguished Members of the Subcommittee on Energy and Mineral Resources, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on H.R. 8003, the *Expanding the Fast Track Act of 2026*. My testimony will be limited to only that bill and the views of the Federal Permitting Improvement Steering Council (Permitting Council).

H.R. 8003 – *Expanding the Fast Track Act of 2026*

The Permitting Council was established in 2015 by Title 41 of the Fixing America’s Surface Transportation Act (FAST-41). As Executive Director, I also serve as the Chair of the Permitting Council, which is otherwise comprised of 13 federal agencies along with the Chair of the White House Council on Environmental Quality and the Director of the Office of Management and Budget.¹ The Office of the Executive Director implements FAST-41, and is primarily focused on improving the transparency and predictability of federal environmental and regulatory reviews and authorizations by coordinating and publicly posting comprehensive permitting timelines for critical infrastructure projects. While our member agencies are regulatory in nature, it is important to note that the Permitting Council, itself, does not set or implement regulatory policy. Instead, the agency serves as a project manager to coordinate environmental and regulatory reviews and authorizations across each federal agency for a given project—and being included on the FAST-41 Dashboard is entirely voluntary for project sponsors.

Since my appointment to the Permitting Council last year, our team has worked to ensure that the agency adheres to the directives given to us by Congress while following the clear leadership of the President to ensure an efficient permitting process while fully retaining environmental and regulatory protections in law. I believe we are operating near the full potential of our authorizing statute for the first time in this agency’s history and are effectively executing on our mission as Congress intended.

Since the beginning of President Trump’s second term, the Permitting Council has added an additional 79 projects to the FAST-41 Dashboard, 39 covered projects and 40 transparency

¹ Designees from the Secretaries of Agriculture, Army, Commerce, Interior, Energy, Transportation, War, Homeland Security, and Housing and Urban Development, the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, and the Chairs of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, Nuclear Regulatory Commission, and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation make up the Permitting Council. 42 U.S.C. 4370m-1(b)(2).

projects. But I am even more proud of the number of projects that have completed their federal reviews in that same time. 26 FAST-41 projects have been completed since January of last year, which is about one-fourth of the projects that have ever been completed in the agency's eleven-year history. There are currently 69 active projects on the Dashboard in 33 states representing 13 different infrastructure sectors. More projects on the FAST-41 Dashboard translates to more critical infrastructure built in America, and more jobs, economic growth, and improved transparency for these projects in the communities where they are being built.

Our success is, in part, due to utilizing our authority to list "transparency" projects on the dashboard for the first time. This authority was provided by Congress to the Permitting Council in the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act in 2021,² and has allowed us to add 40 additional projects to the Dashboard since the start of this administration. While the statute does not provide the same structure and reporting for transparency projects as it does traditional covered projects, increased transparency in the permitting process is always a positive. 18 transparency projects have already finished the appropriate environmental reviews since being added to the Dashboard, showing that simple management of timelines and transparency itself does improve the efficiency of our permitting system.

H.R. 8003, or the *Expanding the Fast Track Act of 2026*, would lower the investment threshold for a covered project from \$200,000,000 to \$50,000,000 starting at the beginning of 2027. Since I took on the role of Executive Director, I have heard from numerous potential project sponsors that the investment threshold is simply too high for their various projects to qualify for FAST-41. These projects span across numerous sectors, from energy and electricity transmission, to broadband, ports, and waterways. Lowering the threshold would allow more project sponsors to utilize the service that the Permitting Council provides and ultimately means more critical infrastructure to support our communities. However, it is important to note that not every project is appropriate for support under the FAST-41 program. As the portfolio continues to grow, Congress should consider if the Permitting Council will eventually require more discretion to select potential projects and ensure the effective use of current resources.

Anytime a change in the scope of our statute is proposed, we must consider whether we have the resources to implement those changes effectively. The Permitting Council currently operates using a number of different funding sources provided by Congress. I spoke earlier about the intense growth that our project portfolio has experienced in the last year and a half, and I am proud that our team has been able to readily meet that increased demand from project sponsors. In addition, the inclusion of transparency projects on the Dashboard has changed the equation for what constitutes a FAST-41 project. Because a transparency project does not have to meet the investment threshold of a covered project, we have included far more projects on the Dashboard that did not have an investment of \$200,000,000 or more. These projects have not taken away from our covered project work—and we are still completing both types of projects faster than ever before.

In summary, the Permitting Council **supports** H.R. 8003, as written. We are well situated to bring in additional projects and continue to show that the FAST-41 process works for projects of all shapes and sizes. I stand ready to work with this Committee on this, or future, legislation, and

² 42 U.S.C. § 4370m-2(b)(2)(A)(iii)

I hope that as your important work continues considering legislative permitting reform, you will consider the important role that the Permitting Council plays in our federal system. We seek to bring as much efficiency and transparency as possible to our projects, and I am proud of what this agency has already accomplish under President Trump's leadership.