

**Congresswoman Cheri Bustos (IL-17)**

*Submitted Testimony for the Record  
House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee  
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Thank you Chairman DeFazio and Ranking Member Graves for giving me the opportunity to share my Transportation and Infrastructure priorities with the Committee today.

As you know, I served on this Committee for my first three terms, and I have a strong appreciation for the essential work it does.

Although I'm excited to now play a part in appropriating funds for the important programs you authorize, I would be lying if I said I didn't miss the work and my colleagues on T&I.

Today, I would like to summarize and submit for the record a document outlining principles that any infrastructure proposal should include, particularly to address the needs of small towns and rural communities.

But before I dive in, I should note that this document was originally created when I visited the White House in 2017 to engage in bipartisan discussions surrounding infrastructure. This underscores that the path forward **MUST** be bipartisan.

This country needs significant investment in our infrastructure to build a strong foundation for a successful economy. To do this, any proposal should do three things:

**First** – it should direct federal investment to areas with **DEMONSTRATED** need;

**Second** – it should **STRENGTHEN** programs that target support to rural areas and small towns, like technical assistance;

**And Third** – it should **MAINTAIN** and **EXPAND** policies, like Buy American and Davis-Bacon requirements, that support America’s manufacturers and workers.

Additionally, any proposal must address several modes of transportation and types of infrastructure.

For example, I represent **nine** locks and dams along the Upper Mississippi and Illinois Rivers, and the failure of a single lock

could shut down traffic up and down the river system – a system that moves 60% of the nation’s grain exports.

However, the nation faces an \$8.75 billion backlog of inland waterway projects, and the locks on the Upper Mississippi need to be upgraded to 1200 feet to accommodate the traffic and movement of goods seen every year.

Investing in this type of infrastructure not only helps our nation’s farmers and boosts our economy, but it also helps **every single household** that consumes these goods by making their movement to market more efficient.

Increased freight traffic on roads, coupled with everyday use, also means we need to invest more in our highways and bridges and provide a sustainable funding source for the Highway Trust Fund.

In 2015, more than 35% of major rural roads across the country were rated in poor and mediocre condition.

Congress needs to address this not only to help the economy, but also to promote basic public safety.

Additionally, an efficient rail network is important for the transport of goods through rural areas, in addition to the success of passenger rail.

However, federal investments in passenger rail infrastructure have lagged even while ridership on long-distance passenger rail routes that serve the Heartland is growing.

We should continue to fund investments in passenger rail and incentives for maintaining freight rail infrastructure.

Lastly, we need to make sure that any package invests in our nation's airports, including airports serving smaller communities and the country's aging air traffic control towers.

And although these fall outside of this Committee's jurisdiction, I am hopeful that a comprehensive package would also include investment in education, healthcare, energy, broadband, and

housing infrastructure.

My parents' generation left us a world-class infrastructure system, and I look forward to working with you on these important initiatives to meet that promise for generations to come.