

Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
Members Day hearing – Wednesday, April 14, 2021
2167 Rayburn House Office Building

Submitted Testimony of Congressman Matt Cartwright (PA-08)

Chairman DeFazio and Ranking Member Graves,

Thank you for allowing me to let the Committee know my surface transportation priorities.

I greatly appreciate the Committee's Member Designated Projects process this year, and, at this time, I am working closely with state and local officials to identify transportation projects that will benefit the citizens of Pennsylvania's Eighth Congressional District, which includes all or a portion of five different Northeastern Pennsylvania counties. I am proud of the strides that local transportation stakeholders have made to bolster the road, bridge, and transit infrastructure in my congressional district, which contains several cities, such as Scranton, Wilkes-Barre, and Hazleton, several transit agencies that serve a large geographic area, hundreds of bridges over its lakes, rivers, and creeks, and multiple Interstate, U.S., and State Highways that carry commuters to the Lehigh Valley and southeastern Pennsylvania, northern New Jersey and New York City, and western Pennsylvania and the Midwest. There is much work to be done to improve transportation in my district, and the ability through the Committee to direct some federal dollars to help complete critical projects will have significant benefits. Although I continue to work to finalize the projects I will submit for the Committee's consideration, there are a few areas that I wish to highlight.

The County of Lackawanna Transit System (COLTS) is in great need of a renovated headquarters and new maintenance facility. This project will be funded primarily by money from the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT). COLTS represents an invaluable piece of the transit picture in my district, providing safe, affordable, and convenient public transportation throughout Lackawanna County. The last major renovation of the headquarters building occurred more than thirty-five years ago. In this time, the facility has suffered its share of wear and tear, and an overhaul is much needed to promote efficient operations. The new project design also places the maintenance area away from the administrative section of the building, which is a necessary safety alteration to the complex.

I also strongly support Lackawanna County's Main Street project, revitalizing the major, north-south "spine" route through the valley section of the county. There is a great need to ease traffic flow and encourage economic development along this corridor.

In Luzerne County, there are transit improvement needs as well, including city of Hazleton Public Transit (HPT) system proposal to replace diesel buses with compressed natural gas (CNG) buses. In addition to the benefits to the environment and quality of life that will result from increased ridership on these more comfortable and up-to-date public transportation options, CNG has much lower carbon content than diesel and other petroleum-based products and produces 20-30% fewer greenhouse gas emissions and 95% fewer tailpipe emissions than diesel. Hazleton Public Transit also needs to purchase land to create a park-and-ride lot to supplement the very limited parking

currently available to customers of HPT and intercity buses. This, too, will increase ridership and result in obvious environmental benefits such as reduced traffic and emissions as well as benefits to riders, such as cost savings, reduced stress, and increased productivity. Resurfacing, re-signaling, and bridge replacement is also a priority for Luzerne County routes.

In Monroe County, there are multiple road and intersection improvement projects that need to be executed, including a project with Route 115, which I am happy to see has begun to see increased economic development spring up around it. Unfortunately, this development has resulted in a notorious bottleneck, and a widening project there will increase traffic flow and result in a safer stretch of highway for commuters in Monroe County.

In Pike and Wayne Counties there are numerous roadway resurfacing and bridge reconstruction projects, two of which are a problematic section of Route 590, which needs resurfaced for safety improvement, and a Lackawaxen River bridge replacement. I am looking to the Committee to assist in directing funds to a number of such critical projects in northeastern Pennsylvania.

I additionally strongly support the Committee including many of the national funding priorities and policy improvements previously found in the surface transportation portion of the Moving Forward Act, H.R. 2, from the 116th Congress. We need to deliver better roads and bridges with as much speed as we can, including repairing tens of thousands of structurally deficient bridges across the country. We also must urgently increase transit options and efficiency to in order to reduce the number of cars on our commuter highways – and also reduce their aggregate emissions. We must address bottlenecks and gridlock on existing roadways, and we need to make all of our transportation infrastructure more resilient. The Committee’s surface transportation authorization legislation in the previous Congress wisely addressed these challenges, and I urge a continuation of that effort this year.

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