

April 14, 2021

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

Dear Chairperson DeFazio,

Thank you for this opportunity to present you and your staff with the most pressing infrastructure priorities and projects for the district I represent, New York's 12th Congressional District.

The American Jobs Plan affords Congress with the opportunity to address the country's urgent need to Build Back Better following this devastating pandemic. The goal of this package is straightforward – rebuilding the American economy. By enacting it, we will create millions of good-paying union jobs, invest in American workers, and boost America's global competitiveness. It will do all of this while reinvigorating American infrastructure in a way that we have not seen since the 1960's. Additionally, it will begin the work of addressing the urgent climate change crisis. As Chairman of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, you have the ability to mold and shape this transformational infrastructure package, and I look forward to working with you to ensure it becomes law.

Through servicing major residential and employment centers, transportation systems engender economic growth and productivity. As you know, public transportation is safer, cheaper for commuters, and better for the environment. By investing in public transportation, we invest in our nation's future. Investment in public transit is crucial in any infrastructure package, and I believe it is vital that we start by investing in the nation's largest public transit system, the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA), which represents 38% of total passenger trips among all U.S. public transit agencies and services the metropolitan region with the largest economic output in the United States. I respectfully request that as your Committee works to pass a reauthorization of federal public transportation programs you include robust funding to expand New York City's subway system.

In particular, I urge Congress to work with the MTA to fund the advancement of the East Side Access (ESA) project. Currently, the Long Island Railroad (LIRR) is the busiest commuter railroad in the United States, with more than 90 million riders a year. It is critical that MTA expand the LIRR to accommodate increasing demands. That is why I strongly support the ESA Project, which will provide LIRR service to Grand Central Terminal on Manhattan's east side, supplementing existing service to Penn Station on Manhattan's west side and the Atlantic Terminal in Brooklyn. With residential populations in Long Island City booming, I also urge my colleagues in Congress to work with the MTA to construct a subway station at Sunnyside Yard in Queens along the LIRR track so that commuters from eastern Queens have a direct, timely route into downtown Manhattan.

Additionally, a strong infrastructure package would make key investments in transit expansion by funding the expansion of the Second Avenue Subway. The MTA completed Phase I of the Second Avenue Subway in 2016 but has yet to begin construction on Phase II. Phase II construction would make use of tunnels that were bored in the 1970s. The finalization of Second Avenue Subway Phase I has already connected and revitalized neighborhoods across Manhattan and Brooklyn with ridership exceeding projections. Once fully complete, the Second Avenue Subway will run 8.5 miles from 125th Street in Harlem down to Hanover Square in the Financial District, allowing local economies to boom and providing significantly improved public transportation to the residential and professional communities along Second Avenue. This will demonstrably improve the quality of life for residents of New York's 12th Congressional District and represents a key upgrade to the interconnectedness of New York's subway system.

Just as improving interconnectivity within New York City is critical to our economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as our response to the climate crisis, we must similarly improve the interconnectivity between American metropolitan regions. Therefore, I believe the House infrastructure package should fund high-speed Amtrak rail between Boston and New York City, so that Americans can travel as easily, safely, and cleanly between regions of the country as they can neighborhoods of a city. This will make travel throughout the Northeast Corridor cleaner, safer, and easier for commuters, and will only bring economic benefits to our nation.

Finally, Congress must provide additional funding for the Gateway Program, which would further increase rail capacity in the Northeast Corridor. As you know, the Northeast Corridor is the most heavily used passenger rail line in the United States. By rebuilding the Portal North Bridge, constructing a two-track Hudson River rail tunnel from New Jersey to Manhattan, and rehabilitating the North River Tunnel, we could greatly reduce commuter delays and congestion, while improving economic output and ease of travel for both New York City and the entire Northeast region.

I respectfully urge the Committee, as well as my colleagues in Congress, to commit to helping New York complete these projects by ensuring the allocation of critical funding. New transit will be used by millions of people, expand economic opportunity, serve neighborhoods that have lacked transportation alternatives, and take people where they need to go. I applaud your commitment to the revitalization of our nation's infrastructure, and I look forward to working with you to expand investment in new transit projects and build a stronger national infrastructure.

Thank you for your consideration of my district's infrastructure priorities, and I stand ready to work with you to ensure we enact a strong infrastructure package into law.

Sincerely,

Carolyn B. Maloney
Member of Congress