

House T&I Committee – Member Day
Congressman Ben Cline
I-81
Wednesday, January 14, 2026

- Thank you, Mr. Chairman.
- I represent a district in the Commonwealth of Virginia in dire need of modernizing some of its ageing infrastructure, especially as Virginia continues to welcome new businesses and increased tourism during America250.
- Most notable for the region I represent is I-81, a road that stretches the entirety of my district from Frederick County in the north to Roanoke County in the south.
- With this vital roadway spanning six states, over 300 miles of which are in Virginia, I have continuously worked for improvements to I-81 and have testified before this committee previously to advocate for federal dollars for its improvement.
- While local economies are becoming more dependent upon I-81 to bring goods to and help create jobs for our region, the aging road has not kept up with the demands of users since it was first constructed over a half-century ago.

- Originally built to accommodate only 15 percent of truck traffic, I-81 now averages over 30 percent of truck traffic each day.
- Additionally, there are nearly 2,000 crashes on I-81 each year, with more than 25 percent involving heavy trucks and more than 45 significant crashes a year causing delays exceeding four hours.
- Current conditions are not only a frustration but a grave public safety concern.
- The Virginia General Assembly has recognized the need to invest in this vital roadway that passes through cities and small towns filled with agribusinesses, technology companies, manufacturers, tourist destinations, and more.
- In 2018, Virginia released the I-81 Corridor Improvement Plan, which revealed what daily users knew all too well: I-81 needs to be improved to meet growing demands.
- The Commonwealth's improvement plan found that more than one-third of trucks and over \$300 billion in goods are transported along the corridor per year.
- The plan also highlighted that Conditions along the corridor are expected to continue to degrade, and by 2040, it is expected that there will be nearly

20 million truck trips carrying three quarters of a trillion dollars' worth of goods every year.

- The entire Virginia section of I-81 needs to be widened to three lanes along with interchange improvements to help address current and future traffic flows and vehicle and truck safety.
- Widening I-81 provides several benefits, including reducing the likelihood of congestion by providing additional roadway capacity, decreasing clearance time of incidents and crashes by providing more space to clear wrecks, and reducing the potential for collisions by allowing vehicles to maneuver safely.
- While I believe that the states are best positioned to allocate resources for projects to repair and restore our roadways, we must ensure that they get the federal funding that is appropriate for the repair and rebuilding of I-81.
- This is why the reauthorization of programs such as the Federal-aid Highway Program, a state-administered federally assisted program, are essential.
- Thank you again for the opportunity to appear before you today and I look forward to working with this committee as it moves forward with the Surface Transportation Reauthorization and other legislation this year.