

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-0607

January 12, 2026

The Honorable Sam Graves
Chairman
House Committee on Transportation &
Infrastructure
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Rick Larsen
Ranking Member
House Committee on Transportation &
Infrastructure
U.S. House of Representatives

Dear Chair Graves and Ranking Member Larsen:

As you begin crafting the upcoming Water Resources Development Act reauthorization, Surface Transportation Reauthorization bill, and priorities for the remainder of the 119th Congress, I respectfully request that you give consideration to the following priorities:

Protect and Restore CRISI Grant Funding for Rail Safety

The recent cancellation of the Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements (CRISI) grant has jeopardized critical rail safety upgrades, including Positive Train Control (PTC) and enhanced crash safety mechanisms. In August 2024, a freight train derailed in Boulder near a local hospital, destroying a rail bridge and injuring two crew members. The Front Range Subdivision, where the derailment occurred, operated without a PTC system.

CDOT's project funded by CRISI would design, install, and test Centralized Traffic Control (CTC) and PTC infrastructure in Westminster and Broomfield, Colorado. These upgrades would significantly improve safety by modernizing signal systems and reducing the risk of derailments, particularly those involving hazardous materials. Restoring CRISI funding would not only enhance rail safety but also lay critical groundwork for Front Range Passenger Rail service, which would provide accessible passenger transit throughout the Colorado Front Range.

Increase Federal Transportation Funding

Despite the funding increases enacted under the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), federal transportation investments remain well below what is needed to meet the nation's growing infrastructure demands. State and local governments need sustained federal support to advance critical projects that improve safety, mobility, and economic competitiveness.

The Joint Passenger Rail service is currently in the planning stage and will deliver a starter passenger rail service connecting Denver Union Station to Fort Collins. This initiative is supported by funding from the Department of Transportation's Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) grant programs. Continued and expanded federal investment is essential to support

planning, environmental review, project development, and implementation. Advancing joint service will improve regional connectivity, reduce highway congestion, and expand mobility options along the Front Range corridor, laying the groundwork for a future Front Range Passenger Rail.

Strengthening the Highway Trust Fund (HTF)

The Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) depends heavily on federal resources from the Highway Trust Fund. In Colorado, these investments support projects across the state, including for communities in Colorado's High Country and major corridors such as the Brighton - Boulder corridor, where funding is improving safety and expanding bike and pedestrian infrastructure.

Water Resources Development Act

As you begin your work preparing the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) 2026 reauthorization, investing in Western water infrastructure and project authorizations must be a central priority for the committee. The Western United States is experiencing unprecedented levels of drought, with well below-average snowpack and increasing temperatures exacerbating the problem. Colorado's national forests and BLM lands form the headwaters of more major rivers than in any other state and provide drinking water for millions of people and irrigation for farms across the West.

I respectfully urge the committee to add Colorado to the list of eligible states for Section 595, Environmental Infrastructure Assistance for Western Rural Water Projects. Expanding WRDA Section 595 to include Colorado would provide a critical tool for drought mitigation, watershed restoration, increasing water supply and storage, and encouraging water reuse. By authorizing target cost-sharing for these projects, this committee could directly address drought impacts in Colorado, helping communities stretch their limited water supply, protect agricultural communities, and provide a stronger system for downstream water users, strengthening long-term water security across the West.

Thank you for your consideration. If you have any questions please contact Nikky Garaga on my staff at nikky.garaga@mail.house.gov or 202.225.2645.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Brittany Pettersen". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a horizontal line.

Brittany Pettersen
Member of Congress