

Transportation and Infrastructure Committee
Members Day Hearing May 1, 2019
Testimony of Rep. Deb Haaland (NM-1)

Chairman DeFazio, Ranking Member Graves, and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to discuss infrastructure priorities for my district, the State of New Mexico, Indian Country, and our nation's public lands.

District and State Priorities

My Albuquerque-area district needs a federal commitment to infrastructure to support local investment in economic development. We need improvements to Paseo Del Norte and Unser Boulevard and to replace the Tijeras Arroyo Bridge to support our booming film industry. Improvements to roads around the Albuquerque International Sunport and runways and taxiways will support the Sunport Economic Development Investment District and connect it to local universities. Water infrastructure needs include storm water management in Santa Fe Village, the Montano Levee on the Rio Grande, and expanding the storage capacity of Abiquiu Reservoir. And New Mexicans depend on railroads, through reliable long-haul Amtrak service and the Rail Runner Express, which will benefit from Positive Train Control investments. I have a more detailed list to submit for the record.

The State of New Mexico is concerned about the Highway Trust Fund's solvency, and I urge you to find a sustainable long-term solution. I have a letter from our Department of Transportation Cabinet Secretary about this and other priorities to submit for the record.

Indian Country Priorities

As one of the first Native American women elected to Congress and Co-Chair of the Native American Caucus, I urge you to address the infrastructure needs in Indian Country to fully honor the federal government's unique government-to-government relationship with Tribes.

The over \$50 billion backlog of Indian Country's infrastructure needs is more extreme than off-reservation communities. For example, 40 percent of housing on reservations is deemed "substandard" compared to only 6 percent of housing nationwide. Less than half of reservation homes are connected to public sewer systems and 16 percent lack indoor plumbing.

The infrastructure needs in Indian Country also include: \$634 million in repairs at dilapidated BIE schools; \$392 million in deferred maintenance for a BIA road system that is still 60 percent dirt and unpaved earth; and the IHS Sanitation Facilities Construction Program, which requires an 80 percent increase to provide clean drinking water and waste disposal. I would like to submit for the record the Tribal Infrastructure report produced by the National Congress of American Indians and an additional list of Indian Country infrastructure needs.

Infrastructure funding must also be coupled with financing mechanisms to establish and strengthen tribal governmental infrastructure, private sector partnerships, and outside investment in infrastructure on tribal lands. Tribes lack parity with states and local governments when it comes to investing in infrastructure because they are unable to levy property taxes due to the trust status of reservation lands. I urge you to address this fundamental injustice so that Native

Americans no longer face the public health and safety hazards that are prevalent on reservations today.

Public Lands and Climate Change

As Chairwoman of the Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests, and Public Lands, I know these national treasures have significant infrastructure needs. I urge you to invest in roads, trails, marinas, and other infrastructure in our national forests and parks, which support the outdoor recreation economy, through a recreation title in an infrastructure package.

Finally, I encourage you to address climate change through infrastructure investments. Native American communities and those of us in the Southwest face threatened water supplies, more severe wildfires, and changes to the natural resources we rely on. I urge you to work with committees across jurisdictions to ensure that an infrastructure plan reduces greenhouse gas emissions while creating jobs and economic opportunities.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify. I look forward to working with you on these important issues.