

The Honorable Ro Khanna
Written Testimony on the Need for Robust & Sustained Investment in our Nation's
Transportation Infrastructure
House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee's
Member Day
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Chairman DeFazio, Ranking Member Graves, and members of the T&I Committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you.

The United States was once among the world leaders in quality infrastructure. Now, we rank just 11th according to the World Economic Forum. In the 2017 report by the American Society of Civil Engineers, the overall assessment of our nation's infrastructure ranked the U.S. at a D+. These poor rankings underscore how our infrastructure is woefully lacking and a daily inconvenience to the citizens of Silicon Valley and other regions across our nation.

I want to be clear that I am talking about infrastructure in its broadest sense -- including not only transportation infrastructure but also funding for our energy grid, broadband and school buildings. In my remarks today, I will focus within the jurisdiction of this Committee, which goes well beyond just highways, bridges, and transit, to also include aviation, federal buildings, high speed rail, ports, heavy rail, and our water and sewer systems.

Transportation is about more than getting from one place to another. It's job creation, economic growth, revitalizing neighborhoods; improving public health through cleaner air and water; making our transportation systems safer, redundant, and resilient; cutting commuter frustration in gridlock, and improving the quality of life for all Americans while positioning our country to compete and win in the 21st Century global economy.

Unfortunately, we have not provided adequate funding of our transportation infrastructure to meet those goals. The Highway Trust Fund (HTF), which is used to fund the Highway and Mass Transit Accounts, derives roughly 85 to 90 percent of its revenue from the "gas tax." Without raising it in almost 30 years, these shortfalls have been filled by transfers from our Treasury's general fund while the Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund goes under-utilized.

Federal investment must leverage state, local, and private investment, not simply replace these other sources of infrastructure funding as has been proposed.

National Infrastructure Plan

I support a bold, robust, comprehensive, and bipartisan infrastructure package along the lines of the trillion dollar proposal proposed by both House and Senate Democrats last Congress. Such a package would make real investment in our infrastructure and create millions of good-paying jobs in every district and state. For example, under the Senate proposal, transportation infrastructure investment would include:

- \$140 billion to ensure Highway Trust Fund solvency over the next decade;
- an additional \$140 billion to repair our nation's roads and bridges;
- \$115 billion to repair and improve public transportation;
- \$50 billion to modernize and improve our rail infrastructure;
- \$40 billion for a new Vital Infrastructure Program (VIP) to support new transportation infrastructure megaprojects which greatly improve transportation networks;
- \$30 billion to promote innovative transportation;
- \$40 billion to improve our airports and even address airplane noise, a large problem in the 17th Congressional District of California;
- \$25 billion for resilient community development; and
- \$20 billion in innovative financing tools.
- \$10 billion for TIGER program expansion;

Such a sustained and large investment would also allow us to provide:

- \$115 billion to modernize the nation's drinking water and wastewater infrastructure systems, along the lines of the Water Affordability, Transparency, Equity, and Reliability (WATER) Act I co-led with Rep. Lawrence (D-MI); and
- \$30 billion for our ports and inland waterways.

These costs are substantial but necessary for this transformation to make a difference in the lives of almost all Americans. How do we pay for this investment? There are a variety of responsible ways, including the following measures:

- Returning the top individual tax rate to 39.6%;
- Restoring the individual alternative minimum tax to 2017 law;
- Restoring the estate and gift taxes primarily benefitting multi-millionaires and billionaires;
- Closing the carried interest loophole; and
- Raising the corporate tax rate to 25%.

This should not be a partisan issue. Championing American competitiveness and success in the 21st Century should be a bipartisan issue. When people drive over a bridge, they don't think "Is this a Republican bridge or is this a Democratic bridge?" What they are expecting is "I can drive over this waterway safely?"

We must remember that we look at a bridge and see the steel beams, those steel beams are manufactured by people right here in the U.S.

Benefits to the 17th Congressional District

Those of us from California know we desperately need increased and sustained investments. The Bay Area population has grown twice as fast in the last five years than it did in the previous ten. Traffic will only get worse. Within 10-15 years, experts predict complete gridlock if we don't make substantial investments in mass transit.

I continue to advocate for a multi-modal transportation system, including mass transit, new buses and more bus routes, ride-sharing services, and the expansion of the Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) system. Here is how such additional funding could be spent in my district:

1. Establish a mass transit system on Highways 85, 101 and 237 to go to where the jobs are;
2. Build a rapid-bus transit lane in municipalities and invest in state-of-the-art buses and more routes to provide an option for everybody and not just those who work at companies with private bus service;
3. Use ride-sharing plans that make mass transit easily accessible;
4. Expand the BART loop to San Jose, Santa Clara, and as far as possible;
5. Add additional lanes at the intersection of Highway 880 and Highway 237 to make it easier for commuters headed to the peninsula.

Do we want ours to be a legacy of congestion and deteriorating infrastructure? Or do we want it to be about increased productivity and additional good-paying jobs?

These solutions, if executed well as part of a responsible national economic development policy, could make an immediate impact on our lives by expanding critical infrastructure, growing the local economy, and bringing good paying jobs to regions all across our nation.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman and Ranking Member, for the opportunity to testify before you today. That concludes my statement and am happy to take any questions you might have.