

FACT SHEET

A ROBUST INFRASTRUCTURE PLAN FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

America needs 21st-century infrastructure investment. The nation's infrastructure is aging, and the impacts of climate change only exacerbate the problem. The cumulative cost of extreme weather events and climate-related disasters on our transportation, energy, water, sewer, and other infrastructure have exceeded \$1.7 trillion since 1980.

As a result of climate change and underinvestment in the nation's infrastructure, Americans in many parts of the country are experiencing higher rates of contaminated water, asthma and other respiratory illnesses, stormwater and wastewater overflows, and increased risk to their health and safety. These impacts threaten our nation's economic vitality, public health, and future. To successfully move forward, America needs a robust infrastructure plan that transitions the nation to cleaner sources of energy, addresses the challenges from a changing climate on our communities, creates jobs, and redresses the negative legacy of past investments.

The 116th Congress has an opportunity to fix it for our future and invest in an infrastructure plan that promotes clean energy now; fixes and fortifies more resilient solutions for our sewers, water supplies, roads, and housing; and safeguards existing environmental protections. This plan should:

ADVANCE A CLEAN ENERGY FUTURE

- **Fund renewable and clean energy deployment.** Support incentives that spur innovation in renewable energy, offshore wind investment, electric vehicle infrastructure, energy efficiency, energy storage, and high-efficiency transmission.
- **Incentivize innovative finance tools to expand green banks and clean energy markets** that improve communities, safeguard the environment, and boost jobs.
- **Accelerate the just transition to a clean energy economy by phasing out fossil fuel extraction on federal lands and waters and aligning public resource management with the public interest.** Promote federal renewable energy development, and prevent the rubber-stamp approval of interstate oil and natural gas pipelines under the Nationwide General Permit system.
- **Increase clean transportation options** via investments in transit, bike and pedestrian projects, greenhouse gas standards, electric vehicles, charging infrastructure, and other opportunities.

- **Advance zero-emissions freight and port electrification.** Provide direct funding and incentives through the Departments of Energy and Transportation to cut carbon and associated emissions at ports and their associated freight infrastructure, which would reduce carbon emissions and improve air quality for nearby communities.

PROTECT OUR WATER SUPPLY

- **Significantly increase funding levels and opportunities for water infrastructure investment.** Triple appropriations to the Clean Water and Drinking Water State Revolving Funds (SRFs). Prioritize funding in the form of grants, rather than loans, for water infrastructure projects that help disadvantaged communities, promote climate resilience, and incorporate green infrastructure and other nature-based solutions. Set aside a portion of the expanded Drinking Water SRF funds to benchmark state and local infrastructure restoration through water loss auditing and reporting, including funds for training. Target funds needed to test for and remediate widespread per- and polyfluoroalkyl substance (PFAS) water contamination, especially in disadvantaged communities.
- **Get lead out of drinking water in homes and schools.** Aggressively address lead contamination by funding full lead service line replacement while prohibiting partial lead service line replacement and the charging of individual homeowners for replacement. Prioritize grants particularly in low-income communities, and provide significant new funding for public schools to deploy water filters, conduct mandatory testing, and remediate lead in their drinking water.
- **Make water bills affordable for low-income and rural Americans** through targeted state revolving funds and Rural Utilities Service funding for disadvantaged communities. Support low-income affordability programs and incentives for utilities to adopt more equitable rate structures, and provide consolidation or regionalization assistance

for smaller utilities to improve affordability and water quality. Establish a robust federal pilot program to assist low-income households in paying water and sewer bills.

- **Protect drinking water sources.** Improve our nation’s water supplies by requiring enhanced Clean Water Act safeguards for bodies of water that are either located in drinking water utilities’ source water protection areas (SWPAs) or designated for use as a drinking water supply. These safeguards could include Clean Water Act programs requiring that application of fertilizers be consistent with watershed-wide pollution budgets; requiring chemical/oil storage facilities to have state-of-the-art containment; prohibiting the filling of wetlands where there exists a practicable alternative; and requiring significant upgrades to, or closure of, certain kinds of waste ponds (e.g., CAFO manure lagoons, coal ash pits) in such waters’ floodplains.

INVEST IN RESILIENT COMMUNITIES

- **Incentivize the use of natural infrastructure.** Natural infrastructure, also known as green infrastructure, is a way of managing, protecting, restoring, and replicating existing natural systems in order to bring communities a wide range of social, economic, and environmental benefits such as flood prevention, climate resilience, and water filtration. At the same time, federal conservation programs that promote natural infrastructure can restore floodplains and preserve wetland forests.

- **Connect communities that have been divided by past transportation investments** and are currently experiencing gaps in transportation infrastructure and services. Provide funding for regional and local projects that support multimodal investment, reconstruct highways and bridges at the end of their life cycle, restore pedestrian access, and promote environmental stewardship.

- **Invest in affordable, climate-resilient housing.** Establish a congressionally mandated grant program that incentivizes the construction of affordable housing, upgrades and preserves existing affordable housing, and promotes better land-use policies. In addition, fund technical assistance programs to support low-income residential energy and water efficiency program design, community energy and water benchmarking.

- **Increase affordable housing and equitable development near transportation options** such as public transit. Prioritize and adequately fund all transit modes to ensure greater access and affordability while reducing GHGs and combating the impact of gentrification and displacement.

- **Reduce the size of energy bills in low-income households** by increasing funding for the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) and the DOE Weatherization Assistance Program.

- **Help low-income neighborhoods rebuild** after national disasters by ensuring permanent congressional authorization for the Community Development Block Grant Disaster Recovery program and emphasizing resilience and disaster mitigation efforts as a new national objective. Ensure rental housing is available and affordable to the lowest-income households following a disaster by increasing funding for the Project-Based Housing Choice Vouchers (PBV) program and/or by expanding the eligible use of disaster vouchers.

- **Prioritize climate-resilient infrastructure investment.** Ensure that all federal investments—programs, projects, and grants—account for the future impacts of climate change. Require hazard mitigation planning and risk assessments and reestablish federal flood protection standards.

SAFEGUARD OUR FUTURE

- **Maintain environmental safeguards and protect the NEPA process.** Preserve and enforce our nation’s bedrock environmental protections rather than sacrificing them in the name of infrastructure “streamlining.” The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) remains a critical federal screening mechanism to ensure that climate, environmental, and community impacts are considered before federal infrastructure decisions are finalized. Congress should repeal recently enacted provisions that undercut the NEPA process.

- **Create family-sustaining jobs.** Ensure all projects built with public resources are subject to Buy America standards that maximize the return to taxpayers and the American economy. Enforce Davis-Bacon Act provisions that ensure workers are paid prevailing wages.

- **Maximize benefits to workers and communities, especially those most in need.** Utilize project labor agreements (PLAs), community benefit agreements, local hire, and other provisions and practices that prioritize improving training, working conditions, and community benefits. Enhance workforce training and development programs to expand the number of skilled workers in new and established industries and increase economic opportunities for communities and local workers, especially for people of color and low-income communities.

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