



June 15, 2020

The Honorable Peter DeFazio
Chair
U.S. House Committee on
Transportation and Infrastructure
2165 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Eleanor Holmes Norton
Chair
Subcommittee on Highways and Transit
U.S. House Committee on
Transportation and Infrastructure
2165 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairs:

On behalf of the National Association of Counties (NACo) and America's 3,069 counties, thank you for your recent action to provide critical surface transportation resources in H.R. 7095, the *INVEST in America Act*. As owners of 45 percent of public roads and 38 percent of the National Bridge Inventory who also directly support 78 percent of the nation's public transit systems, counties rely on the programs authorized in this legislation and appreciate the Committee's work to produce a full reauthorization ahead of the current law's upcoming expiration.

Counties appreciate the update to the set-aside for off-system bridges. We own over 62 percent of these transportation assets across the country, the majority of which are already compromised for safety and badly in need of additional investments. We also appreciate the attention to local infrastructure with the creation of new grant programs that counties may apply for directly through the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT). Finally, thank you for addressing at-grade rail-highway crossings. This is a big priority for counties, especially those in rural areas, where two-thirds of rail freight originates, thereby resulting in more of these dangerous crossings in comparison to urban settings.

As the Committee moves toward markup and consideration of amendments, counties urge you to consider amending the High Risk Rural Road (HRRR) special rule as it is written in H.R. 7095 to ensure that states obligate all of its funds to the HRRR in the year the rule is triggered, as is the case under current law. We believe that, since the rule is triggered by fatality rates, further delaying funds that could be used to make safety improvements along a HRRR is both dangerous and irresponsible and urge you to correct this provision in the bill.

Secondly, counties ask you to ensure that truck weight and size requirements remain unchanged. We understand an amendment has been introduced that would allow more weight on a particular axle, and while we recognize the need for flexibility in ensuring the efficient movement of goods across the country, counties urge you to safeguard our already crumbling local streets by preventing this change from becoming a "slippery slope". According to USDOT, nearly half of all heavy truck vehicle miles traveled occur on local *rural* roads that may be even more in need of attention than their urban counterparts. Simply put, without increased direct funding to accommodate the increased strain on local roads that would come from an increase in truck size or weight, the safety of both our county residents and those who travel our roads each day would be further compromised.

Again, counties thank you for your work to produce the INVEST in America Act. We believe this is an important step towards a comprehensive reauthorization that recognizes the need for a strong intergovernmental partnership in returning America's transportation infrastructure to states of good repair and planning for the future. We look forward to working with you to achieve our shared goals of increasing safety, improving the national infrastructure system and its resiliency, enhancing economic competitiveness and maximizing the quality of life for all Americans.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Matthew Chase". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the beginning of the first name.

Matthew Chase
CEO/Executive Director
National Association of Counties