



June 8, 2021

Dear Chairs DeFazio, Norton and Payne:

U.S. PIRG and Environment America are writing in support of the INVEST in America Act you introduced June 4, 2021, which would help transform transportation by investing in roads, bridges, transit, and walking and biking infrastructure with an emphasis on fixing existing infrastructure and reducing pollution that harms our health and our climate.

Past federal transportation investments have made it easier and cheaper to travel by car, but at a high cost. Each year, pollution from cars, trucks and other vehicles cuts short an estimated 58,000 lives¹, and increases the risk of lung cancer, stroke and heart disease.² Cars are much safer than they used to be. But motor vehicle crashes each year still kill an estimated 40,000 Americans and seriously injure 4.5 million.³ And, in a conclusion that should shock nobody, one study found the morning commute to be the least favorite⁴ part of the day for many Americans.

Transportation is also now America's number one source of carbon pollution,⁵ with greenhouse emissions from cars, trucks, buses and other vehicles surpassing every other source. We simply can't solve global warming without changing how Americans get around. By electrifying our

¹ Fabio Caiazzo et al, "Air pollution and early deaths in the United States. Part I: Quantifying the impact of major sectors in 2005," *Atmospheric Environment*, Volume 79, 2013, Pages 198-208, <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S1352231013004548>.

² Elizabeth Ridlington and Christy Leavitt, "Trouble in the Air: Millions of Americans Breathe Polluted Air," *Environment America Research & Policy Center, U.S. PIRG Education Fund and Frontier Group*, 2018, <https://uspig.org/reports/usp/trouble-air>.

³ "Motor Vehicle Deaths in 2020 Estimated to be Highest in 13 Years, Despite Dramatic Drops in Miles Driven," *National Safety Council*, 2021, <https://www.nsc.org/road-safety/safety-topics/fatality-estimates>.

⁴ Melissa Dahl, "11 Facts About Your Soul-Sucking Commute," *The Cut*, 2015, <https://www.thecut.com/2015/03/11-facts-about-your-soul-sucking-commute.html>.

⁵ "Transportation Replaces Power in U.S. as Top Source of CO2 Emissions," *Yale Environment 360*, 2017, <https://e360.yale.edu/digest/transportation-replaces-power-in-u-s-as-top-source-of-co2-emissions>.

cars, trucks and buses, and expanding usage of the cleanest forms of transportation — walking, biking and transit — we can not only reduce but virtually eliminate transportation pollution. Doing so would ensure a stable climate, cleaner air, and healthier lives for our kids.

The INVEST in America Act would make needed progress in tackling climate change, expanding access to walking, biking and transit and improving safety, and would ensure we make the best use of existing infrastructure by taking a “fix it first” and multimodal approach. We are particularly supportive of the following policies and funding:

Tackling climate change by electrifying cars and buses, funding public transit, and through new policies and funding:

- Authorize \$109 billion for public transit to increase routes, reduce transit maintenance backlog, and provide more frequent service, resulting in better options for riders, improved environmental outcomes, and increased access to jobs and essential destinations
- Provide \$4 billion for electric vehicle charging infrastructure, require interoperability for most EV drivers for chargers receiving federal funding, and allow EV charging infrastructure along highways and at rest stops where it is convenient for drivers
- Provide \$4.085 billion for zero-emission buses
- Dedicate \$8.3 billion for activities targeted to reduce carbon pollution, direct U.S. DOT to establish new performance measures for greenhouse gas emissions, and requires states that are not making progress on carbon emission reductions to dedicate additional federal funds to projects that will reduce emission

Expanding access to walking and biking, and improving safety:

- Dedicate 10 percent of the Surface Transportation Program to the Transportation Alternatives Program, a critical resource for communities looking to expand walking and biking; provide \$500 million additional funding for Complete Streets and vulnerable road user safety projects; and \$1 billion for an Active Transportation Connectivity grant program
- Require a “complete streets” approach that takes into account the needs of all road users, while preserving flexibility to design streets for each community’s needs
- Focus on the safety of people walking and biking, ensure that states with high levels of deaths on their roads work to reduce fatalities, and prohibit states from setting regressive targets related to safety
- Expand CMAQ eligibility to include micromobility projects, including bikeshare, shared scooters, and docking stations

Fix it first:

- Emphasize fixing and maintaining existing infrastructure and consider alternative approaches, such as transit projects, before considering any new highway expansions
- Utilize life-cycle cost analysis to evaluate the total economic cost of a transportation project, instead of building projects that cannot afford to be maintained
- Dedicate \$3 billion to reconnect communities divided by highways

Additionally, we thank the chairs for preserving the protections of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) in this bill. NEPA is a powerful tool that encourages smart and sustainable infrastructure decisions. Important environmental protections should not be sacrificed in the name of regulatory streamlining.

We also support the inclusion of \$400 million for wildlife crossings. Too often, highways have carved up and paved over critical wildlife habitat. Wildlife crossings will help bighorn sheep, lynx and many other species cross highways safely while reducing crashes.

In addition to supporting the overarching bill, U.S. PIRG and Environment America urge support for any amendments to increase funding for transit operations.

Given our current transportation challenges, from crumbling roads and bridges to ever-increasing pollution, it's no wonder Americans broadly support investing in transportation. Earlier this year, our organizations delivered a letter by more than 360 local officials from 34 states in support of investments in clean, electric transportation.⁶ Recent polling sponsored by Environment Oregon, Environment America and Earthjustice, in collaboration with the League of Conservation Voters, found 76 percent of voters in Chair DeFazio's district support investments to rebuild roads and bridges and modernize public transportation to ensure it is cleaner and able to serve more people. The poll also found large majorities support addressing climate change, reducing pollution from vehicles, and investing in electric vehicles and charging stations.⁷

⁶ "Over 360 local officials from 34 states call for infrastructure that protects our health and environment," *Environment America*, March 2021, <https://environmentamerica.org/news/ame/over-360-local-officials-34-states-call-infrastructure-protects-our-health-and-environment>.

⁷ "Poll: Oregonians represented by Rep. DeFazio rate climate provisions of infrastructure plan highly," *Environment Oregon*, May 2021, <https://environmentoregon.org/news/ore/poll-oregonians-represented-rep-defazio-rate-climate-provisions-infrastructure-plan-highly>.

This bill on its own will not solve climate change; in particular, significantly more funding is needed to electrify buses and build a nationwide network of electric vehicle charging stations, as called for in President Biden's American Jobs Plan. But it will significantly improve transportation and we look forward to working with you to support its passage.

Sincerely,

Katie Murtha, Vice President of Government Affairs, U.S. PIRG and Environment America

Lisa Frank, Executive Director, Washington Legislative Office, Environment America

Matt Casale, Environment Campaigns Director, U.S. PIRG

U.S. PIRG is a federation of independent, state-based, citizen-funded Public Interest Research Groups in 25 states, whose role is to find common ground around the commonsense solutions that will make our future healthier, safer and more secure. Learn more at uspirg.org.

Environment America is a national network of 29 state environmental groups. Our staff work together for clean air, clean water, clean energy, wildlife and open spaces, and a livable climate. Our members across the United States put grassroots support behind our research and advocacy. Learn more at environmentamerica.org.

Environment America and U.S. PIRG are part of The Public Interest Network, which operates and supports organizations committed to a shared vision of a better world and a strategic approach to social change. Learn more at publicinterestnetwork.org.

Washington Legislative Office: 600 Pennsylvania Ave SE, Suite 400, Washington, DC 20003