

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-1304

March 9, 2022

The Honorable JB Pritzker
Governor of Illinois
207 State House
Springfield, IL 62706

Dear Governor Pritzker:

The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) includes the largest federal investment for transportation infrastructure in decades. This funding, complemented by the state's historic Rebuild Illinois Program, presents a once-in-a-generation opportunity for us to strengthen one of our state's biggest economic advantages – our transportation system.

Right now, Illinois' transportation system has many challenges. It produces the most greenhouse gasses of any sector in the state. Legacy highway infrastructure built decades ago continues to divide Latino and Black communities and subject them to harmful air pollutants. In addition, injuries and deaths on our roadways, including cyclists and pedestrians, are at their highest level in recent history.

These challenges are why the United States Department of Transportation (DOT) [encourage states](#) and local governments to invest the funds from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law in ways that mitigate climate change, improve safety, - especially for disinvested communities - address racial equity, and reshape our transportation system so it is accessible to all users.

Meeting these goals will require state departments of transportation, like the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) and other agencies, to revisit existing practices and policies and develop new ways to build and operate the transportation system.

As you implement this important legislation, we encourage you to align the delivery of the bipartisan infrastructure legislation with the following principles so that we can successfully compete for the additional billions in federal funds that will be made available in the years ahead and meet our shared goal of making Illinois' transportation network the safest, cleanest, most equitable, and modern in the country:

Transparent, Data-Driven Decision Making: Clear, detailed communication of where and why we are investing transportation dollars is key to maintaining the public's trust and delivering meaningful results. IDOT and other transportation agencies should clearly outline the revenues and spending levels expected over the next five years and articulate the goals and anticipated outcomes of that spending, including: safety improvements, better

access for low-income and marginalized populations, economic productivity, and lower greenhouse gas emissions. The state's new performance-based programming law (HB 253) should be implemented with tools that can capture these outcomes and be applied to transportation projects throughout the state.

Coordination, Consensus, and Prioritization: The BIL includes more than \$125 billion in federal, competitive funding – five times more than previous federal transportation laws. Only projects that hew closely to the U.S. DOT's Policy on Using Bipartisan Infrastructure to Build a Better America should be put forward. Specifically, it's recommended the state and other transportation agencies develop joint applications and support each other in accessing competitive federal funding. We will be able to secure even more funding when we are united and competing with our peer states and cities, not each other.

Develop the Contractors and Workers We Need Now and in the Future: The historic funding level in this law will create hundreds of new contract opportunities and thousands of new jobs for years. These opportunities should be distributed equitably among Minority and Women Owned Businesses (MWBE's) so that we can build a robust pipeline of Women, Black, Latino, Asian, and other minority owned businesses. The state should work with groups representing these businesses, like the Hispanic American Construction Industry Association (HACIA) and Conference of Minority Transportation Officials (COMTO), to ensure that MWBE's have equitable access to these new contracting opportunities. Additionally, provisions in the new law give public agencies new tools to hire locally from communities where projects are being built. The state, local governments, labor unions, and the private sector need to work together to ensure we have the capacity to efficiently deliver transportation projects and do so with contractors and workers that reflect the diversity of our state.

Center Investments to Improve Racial Equity and Address Climate Change: The transportation sector is the largest emitter of greenhouse gasses, and every project should be measured for how it will address climate change. Projects that reduce greenhouse gasses (and other air pollutants) and improve the resilience of the transportation network need to be prioritized. Transportation investments have historically disconnected Latino and Black communities from opportunity – making it more expensive and difficult to reach good jobs, education, and health care. Every project should measure the impact and benefits to low income and underrepresented communities, and projects that improve the safety and access for these populations should be prioritized for funding and completion.

Invest in Maintenance and Modernization - Not Expansion: Years of experience in the Chicago region and metro areas across the country shows highway expansion fails to achieve long-term congestion relief but instead, increases pollution and further isolates people who can't afford or aren't physically able to drive. The policy framework from the Federal Highways Administration (FHWA) for implementing the BIL calls for states to prioritize projects that fix existing infrastructure and improve our transportation corridors so they safely move more people - not vehicles -above projects that expand road capacity. It's critical Illinois take this guidance to heart and reevaluate planned road expansion projects in

IDOT's Multi-Year Plan (MYP), transparently analyze the costs and benefits, and shift investment towards more efficient and effective projects.

Prioritize Transit and Active Transportation: The federal infrastructure law gives wide discretion to states to flex highway trust fund dollars from road projects to transit and active transportation projects. For decades, federal and state investments have largely ignored the needs of people who walk, bike, and ride transit, forcing people to have access to a car to get where they need to go. Nearly all state highways and arterial streets are unsafe and uncomfortable for people walking and biking despite connecting to many popular local destinations. These same streets lack any infrastructure to make transit more accessible, fast, and reliable. It's essential Illinois take advantage of this opportunity to reverse course and improve compliance with the state's Complete Streets Law by putting the needs of at-risk users such as pedestrians and cyclists first. Project types such as road diets, sidewalks, protected bike lanes, trails, bus-only lanes and bus rapid transit should be prioritized for BIL funds.

Community-Based Investment: The bipartisan infrastructure law includes funding for energy, water, broadband, and environmental remediation. Strategic alignment across Rebuild Illinois, the Climate and Equitable Jobs Act, and this federal infrastructure bill has the potential to maximize the impact of this cross-jurisdictional, layered funding. These cross-cutting investments should leverage existing federal and local funds for housing and transportation improvements so a comprehensive investment strategy can address chronic issues of access to jobs, housing costs, air quality, and travel times.

Innovation: The BIL contains new tools for state and local communities to improve the safety and convenience of our transportation systems more quickly. IDOT and local agencies can use more flexible design guides to produce safer streets for all users, not just vehicles. It is important for the state to consider utilizing modern construction techniques facilitated by the infrastructure bill like design-build project delivery to improve maintenance and construction of road, rail, transit, and aviation projects.

Illinoisans deserve a transportation system in which everyone can affordably, reliably, and safely reach their destinations — a progressive, forward-thinking vision that centers working people's needs including a more equitable, accessible, and sustainable transportation system that leaves no one behind.

The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law provides a path forward to fulfilling this vision, but only if we seize the moment and implement the right policies and projects. The success of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law will depend greatly on the implementation and investment strategies of the State of Illinois. We believe strategies that adhere to the principles above will guarantee the success of this historic legislation.

Thank you for your leadership and commitment to improving the transportation system in Illinois. We stand ready to work with you to ensure the BIL delivers the intended transformational benefits for all Illinoisans and our country.

Sincerely,

Jesús G. "Chuy" García
Member of Congress

Bobby L. Rush
Member of Congress

Sean Casten
Member of Congress

Marie Newman
Member of Congress

Danny K. Davis
Member of Congress

Jan Schakowsky
Member of Congress

Mike Quigley
Member of Congress

Bradley S. Schneider
Member of Congress

CC: Omer Osman, Secretary of Illinois Department of Transportation

The Honorable Emanuel "Chris" Welch, Speaker of the Illinois House of Representatives

The Honorable Don Harmon, President of the Illinois Senate

The Honorable Lori Lightfoot, Mayor of Chicago

The Honorable Toni Preckwinkle, Cook County Board President

Dave Bennett, Executive Director of the Metropolitan Mayors Caucus

Leanne Redden, Executive Director of the Regional Transportation Authority

Dorval Carter, President of Chicago Transit Authority

Jim Derwinski, CEO/Executive Director of Metra

Melina Metzger, Interim Director of PACE

Erin Aleman, Executive Director of the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning