



A bold voice for transportation workers

TTD SUPPORTS SIGNIFICANT INVESTMENTS IN AMERICA'S INFRASTRUCTURE

[Years of underinvestment](#) in our roads, rail lines, transit systems, airports, and seaports have taken their toll, and it's working families who pay the price—in excruciatingly long lines at airports, inadequate public transit services, and potholed roads and bridges that are no longer safe to travel across. In soul-crushing commutes, ever-tightening pocketbooks, and limited access to good jobs, educational opportunities, and medical care.

President Biden inherited an infrastructure backlog in the trillions and a transportation system, which after years of neglect, costs the average family \$3,200 a year in lost time and car repairs, leaves 900,000 jobs on the table annually, and is projected to cost American businesses \$7 trillion in sales by 2025. Adequately addressing our nation's infrastructure crisis and rebalancing our economy in favor of workers must remain among the top priorities for Congress and the administration in 2021. More than ever, Americans are depending on our political leaders to improve their quality of life, create and sustain good, middle-class jobs, and secure America's position as a world economic leader by giving this country the world-class transportation network we all deserve.

Invest in America's Roads and Bridges

Whether brick and mortar stores, e-commerce sites, or agricultural operations, Americans count on a supply chain that moves goods with a high level of precision. An interconnected highway and bridge system is critical to move freight traffic that the United States Department of Transportation anticipates will increase by 40 percent within 25 years. But more than just our national economy, the failure to invest in our roads means that the average American may spend about 100 hours each year—around 2.5 weeks—stuck in traffic on top of costly repairs to their vehicles from poor road conditions.

Highway spending has come nowhere close to keeping pace with current needs, let alone projected demand. As a result, state-level departments of transportation are forced to balance the needs of new capacity against the pressures of growing repair backlogs—a zero-sum game that affects all Americans, from farmers who rely on highways to get their crops to market to city dwellers who purchase produce shipped in from rural communities.

It is imperative that lawmakers recognize the vital role our roads, bridges, and highways play in the everyday lives of Americans and in our national economy, and meet the challenges we face with the kind of robust investments that will take care of maintenance backlogs and allow for increased capacity.

Increase Investments in Public Transit

In communities across the country, [public transportation is the vital lifeline](#) people rely on to get to their homes, jobs, schools, and job training programs. But underinvestment has led to unreliable or inadequate service that prevents transit systems from meeting or driving demand. Riders often find bus and subway systems undependable, unpredictable, and in some cases, even dangerous. As a result, our roads become more congested as commuters find alternative methods of getting around. Transit workers themselves are required to do more with less, and often find the demands of their jobs changed by [technological advances](#), with no training programs in place to help them meet those new needs.

[New research](#) shows that commuting time—not education or family structure—is emerging as the strongest factor in determining whether someone can escape poverty, and access to public transportation plays a crucial role in economic mobility. For the millions of Americans who cannot afford a vehicle, a simple bus or subway route can mean the difference between a life of poverty or access to opportunity.

Ensuring that there is a strong, functioning public transportation network as Americans return to their normal way of life is more critical than ever with an end to the COVID crisis clearly on the horizon. Significant investments are necessary not just to bring our transit system to a state of good repair, but also to grow service and expand access in cities of all sizes.

Invest in Freight and Passenger Rail

America's freight rail network and its workforce move \$174 billion worth of goods and raw materials annually. More than 800,000 Americans rely on commuter rail to get them safely to and from home, work, and school. And communities across the country count on Amtrak and its national network for economic growth and development opportunities, good jobs, and as a lifeline to other segments of our transportation system.

Despite the important role freight and passenger rail has played throughout the history of our country, these industries face threats that could impact our entire economy. Essential capital infrastructure improvements like the Gateway project must be completed to ensure the efficient transit of both freight and passenger trains along the economic hub that is the Northeast Corridor. Other components of shared infrastructure, like the Civil War era Baltimore and Potomac Tunnel are decades overdue for replacement and upgrades.

An infrastructure plan must commit to investing in and supporting these networks while recognizing that the safety of the entire system depends squarely on preserving the good jobs found in that industry. In the freight rail sector, despite consistent profits, Wall Street investors are imposing a [dangerous new business model](#) that threatens the integrity of this industry and the good jobs it creates, and opens the door to substantial safety risks for frontline workers and the communities where freight trains operate.

Similarly, Amtrak has repeatedly come under threat by austerity-driven politicians and other anti-government ideologues who want to gut funding for our national passenger rail system. Routes that provide many rural communities with the only viable link to other segments of our transportation network have previously come under fire from the carrier itself—in the form of reduced service, a degraded passenger experience, and the elimination and [outsourcing of good jobs](#). Instead of going backwards, we must forge ahead on an ambitious Amtrak agenda that allows us to reach new destinations, procure new equipment, and offer a world-class intercity passenger rail service. We must also support transformative passenger rail projects, like the development of high-speed rail corridors that will create jobs both on new railroads and in construction and equipment manufacturing while connecting communities in ways that were previously impossible.

Particularly as railroads emerge from the impacts of COVID, it is clear that now is the time for a bold infrastructure package that brings intercity rail service to the fore, addresses long overdue infrastructure backlogs, and looks to the future of the rail industry, while ensuring that railroads continue to be a source of good 21st century jobs.

Invest in Ports and Support Maritime Commerce

A strong maritime industry, competitive ports and harbors, and a vibrant domestic waterborne commerce sector are all critical to America's economic and national security interests. An infrastructure investment plan must embrace policies that support maritime transportation and the thousands of good jobs created in the seafaring, shipbuilding, and longshore sectors.

U.S. ports should be the envy of the world and are critical to our ability to compete and win in the global marketplace. After years of efforts, Congress finally authorized the spend-out of the unused billions in the Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund, and these funds should be quickly allocated to the dredging projects needed to deepen ports and harbors, allowing them to accommodate increasingly large and modern vessels. On-dock improvements must also be a priority, particularly as ports and harbors clamor for increased and improved intermodal connections to better link them to the broader transportation network and communities across the nation. These investments should seek to improve efficiency, safety, and connectivity, and should not include the procurement of fully automated cargo handling equipment.

Longstanding federal policies that promote the U.S.-flag fleet including the [Jones Act](#), the [Maritime Security Program](#), and cargo preference laws must be supported and strengthened by the Biden administration, and recent messaging from the White House indicates that he is committed to bolstering the U.S.-flag fleet. Taken together, these laws protect the U.S. maritime industry from unfair foreign competition. These laws also fulfill key national security needs, as these same mariners provide irreplaceable sealift capability to the military in times of war or humanitarian crisis. A proposal should also support policies that seek to grow the sector, such as the increased use of [underutilized waterways for domestic shipping](#).

Give our Aviation System the Support it Deserves

The United States has the most sophisticated aviation system in the world—and one that plays a central role in our national economy. Prior to the pandemic, two million passengers flew on 70,000 flights every single day in America. Aviation supported nearly 12 million jobs and over \$1.5 trillion in total economic activity. Yet, an industry that is so critical to much of our world today and will be vital in rebuilding our economy once the pandemic is behind us, is operating on outdated technology and infrastructure that can barely keep up with demand.

Every day, the Americans who keep our aviation system safe and secure—including flight attendants, pilots, air traffic controllers, gate agents, inspectors and safety specialists, mechanics, and transportation security officers—are forced to contend with these inefficiencies and uncertainties and it's only going to get worse.

By 2034, U.S. airlines will carry 1.2 billion passengers per year. Yet, [dangerous government shutdowns](#), unpredictable funding levels, and staffing shortages threaten a system that, for years, has struggled to keep up with growing demand. NextGen modernization projects—which are needed to upgrade our air traffic control system from WWII-era technology—require consistent, dedicated, and adequate funding. Air traffic control towers and radar facilities themselves are also in dire need of upgrades and replacements as many have long exceeded their useful lifespan. Other components of airport infrastructure are also in need of investment in order to accommodate the continued growth of the industry. These types of investments will increase efficiency, reduce waste, and allow for greater job growth.

Commit to Creating Good, Middle Class Jobs and Enhancing Workers' Rights

As we attempt to meet our transportation needs and invest in infrastructure in a way that will help us recover from the economic effects of COVID-19, we cannot ignore the fact that America today is at a crossroads. Despite the pandemic, productivity remains at an all-time high, and corporations are raking in profits like never before, yet many working families are struggling to reach and maintain incomes that can support a family. The introduction of new technologies, the gross misclassification of employees, and the emergence of the on-demand economy are changing the nature of work itself. Meanwhile, the most important tool working people have to get ahead—union membership—is being attacked and vilified across the country.

This administration and Congress have a clear choice to make: support a future for this country where powerful corporations and wealthy CEOs remain unchecked in their power. Or a future that puts working people first, where corporations are held accountable, finding a job that pays a living wage is not hard to do, and emerging technologies are used to enhance work and make workplaces safer.

The second option is possible, and the right investments in our transportation system and infrastructure are part of the path forward. Strong federal investments in these sectors create the kinds of good, middle-class jobs we can be proud of. By investing in our infrastructure, we have an opportunity to rebuild our country, breathe new life into the American middle class, and start addressing longstanding issues of systemic racism and the widening wealth gap.

Unlike jobs in the growing on-demand economy, positions found in transportation and infrastructure are more likely to pay living wages, come with benefits like health insurance and retirement plans, and be stable. This positive job climate is not intrinsic to transportation; it is the result of strong unionization rates in many parts of this sector.

Furthermore, when strong labor protections are paired with infrastructure spending, we can ensure taxpayer dollars are used to support fair wages and safe working conditions for frontline workers. Any large investment in infrastructure must be paired with Davis-Bacon, 13(c), domestic preferences, and other protections for rail and public sector employees.

By taking seriously the needs of America's working families and meeting our infrastructure crisis head on, we can breathe new life into the American middle-class, and create the kind of economic stability and world-class infrastructure we all require and deserve.

Policy Statement S21-04
Adopted April 21, 2021