



AMERICAN COUNCIL OF ENGINEERING COMPANIES

May 24, 2021

The Honorable Tom Carper
Chairman
Committee on Environment & Public Works
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Shelley Moore Capito
Ranking Member
Committee on Environment & Public Works
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Chairman Carper and Ranking Member Capito:

The American Council of Engineering Companies – the voice of the nation’s engineering industry – strongly supports the committee’s bipartisan Surface Transportation Reauthorization Act. This essential legislation provides critical resources necessary to upgrade our roads and bridges, improve safety, incorporate new technologies, and enhance the resilience and sustainability of our transportation networks.

A long-term surface transportation reauthorization bill ought to be the centerpiece of a national infrastructure-based economic recovery and jobs agenda. State departments of transportation and local transportation agencies rely on consistent, multi-year funding commitments to plan and implement vital improvement projects that foster and support economic growth. We applaud the committee for advancing a bipartisan bill that will ensure five years of growing investment in core infrastructure programs.

In addition to the robust funding increases, ACEC also supports the measures in the bill to promote a more resilient transportation system. America’s engineering industry is helping our clients confront the challenges of a changing climate, working with public and private sector partners to reduce their carbon footprint and adapt to the effects of sea level rise and extreme weather events. Partnering with our firms, transportation agencies are tasked with responding to and recovering from hazards such as floods, hurricanes, landslides, and wildfires that threaten human lives and disrupt critical services across communities and states. Your surface transportation reauthorization bill provides the resources necessary to improve resiliency and durability so that structures can better resist damage, infrastructure can be assessed more accurately following a disaster, and systems can return to service more quickly.

ACEC also appreciates the inclusion of provisions in the bill to facilitate more efficient project delivery, including the codification of the One Federal Decision policy. Our firms are engaged across the country in conducting environmental reviews, advising on mitigation measures, and helping public agencies navigate other federal and state regulatory requirements. The provisions in your bill will allow project sponsors to avoid unnecessary delays while still ensuring robust environmental protections and public involvement.

As the bill moves forward ACEC would respectfully request the Committee's support for language to correct an unforeseen regulatory problem facing engineering firms that received PPP loans and work on federal-aid highway and transit projects. A provision in the Federal Acquisition Regulations (FAR) would force firms that qualify for forgiven PPP loans to return this critical assistance, which could put jobs at risk and undercut the core purpose of the loan program. No other industries involved in delivering federal-aid transportation projects appear to be similarly impacted by this FAR provision, and we would ask for corrective language to ensure that engineering firms are treated in a like manner.

U.S. engineering firms are innovative problem solvers, and the funding and programs in your bill will unlock their potential to modernize our highway and bridge networks. We strongly support committee passage, and we look forward to working with your colleagues on other committees of jurisdiction to advance a full surface transportation bill through the Senate.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Linda Bauer Darr". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial "L".

Linda Bauer Darr
President & CEO