

Crapo Statement at Hearing on Infrastructure Funding
May 18, 2021

Washington, D.C.--U.S. Senator Mike Crapo (R-Idaho), Ranking Member of the U.S. Senate Finance Committee, delivered the following remarks at a hearing entitled, "Funding and Financing Options to Bolster American Infrastructure."

The text of Ranking Member Crapo's remarks, as prepared, is below.

"Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for holding this timely hearing on funding and financing options for our nation's infrastructure.

"Infrastructure investment has traditionally been bipartisan and accomplished through regular order.

"I am encouraged by the productive meeting I had last week with President Biden and some of my Republican Senate colleagues about the need to modernize and expand our transportation system and broadband network in a bipartisan manner.

"The framework Republican Senators discussed with President Biden included: roads and bridges, transit, rail, airports, drinking water and wastewater infrastructure, port and inland waterways, water storage, and broadband infrastructure.

"Consideration of offsetting the cost of infrastructure with a corporate tax rate increase or increases in international taxes, especially coming out of the largest negative shock to the economy on record, is counterproductive and a non-starter on my side of the aisle.

"With the FAST Act extension expiring at the end of September, reauthorization of our surface transportation programs should be the basis of any infrastructure conversations.

"As our witnesses will discuss, Congress must provide long-term stability and certainty for these programs so that transportation agencies, cities, counties and states across the country can make responsible long-term transportation planning decisions.

"For the last few transportation authorizations, Congress has made the decision to spend more than the receipts going into the Highway Trust Fund.

"In order to advance a comprehensive, long-term reauthorization bill, it is important that we do so in a fiscally responsible manner.

"There is no silver bullet for how to pay for transportation infrastructure, but historically it has been paid for by user fees, which makes sense.

“For many years, the users of transportation infrastructure paid fees for that use through the gas and diesel taxes which were deposited into the Highway Trust Fund, and then distributed to pay for our nation’s road, bridges and transit systems.

“There have been many changes to the transportation landscape since Congress last raised the gas tax in 1993, such as increased fuel efficiency and a significant increase in electric vehicles, or EVs, on the road.

“With this evolution, Congress needs to ensure all users of the transportation infrastructure are paying into the Highway Trust Fund.

“To make up the projected \$195 billion 10-year shortfall of the Highway Trust Fund, Congress needs to think creatively of ways to ensure EVs are paying in their fair share.

“If we are able to identify a topline spending number and go through a bipartisan FAST Act reauthorization process, I am ready to work with my colleagues on the other side of the aisle to do the hard work of addressing the solvency of the Highway Trust Fund.

“With that, the United States will have the funding we need to maintain and modernize our transportation system to meet the rapidly evolving landscape of today and in the future.

“To maximize use of taxpayer dollars, we should consider proposals to attract private capital for infrastructure projects, repurpose unused federal funds, and improve and expand upon existing infrastructure loan programs.

“We should consider how public private partnerships can fit into our comprehensive infrastructure funding and financing approach.

“The Transportation Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (TIFIA), Railroad Rehabilitation and Improvement Financing (RRIF) and Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (WIFIA) are good examples of financing tools that can leverage federal resources, and we should consider ways those programs should be improved and expanded.

“Private Activity Bonds (PABs) for transportation projects have proven so attractive that the program is oversubscribed, with the \$15 billion cap having been met and additional applications outstanding.

“We should consider how PABs and other bond programs can be used to help states and localities move their infrastructure projects forward.

“There are hundreds of billions of dollars in unspent funds from COVID relief packages.

“Those funds should be put to work and repurposed to fund infrastructure projects.

“Mr. Chairman, the word ‘infrastructure’ itself has become somewhat of a fluid term lately.

“As this hearing demonstrates, there is bipartisan support for finding long-term funding and financing solutions for transportation infrastructure, as well as increasing access to broadband connections, particularly in rural America.

“Americans rely heavily upon broadband technology for business, government, education and personal activities.

“Efforts have been underway for some time to address a ‘digital divide’ in broadband deployment between rural, urban and suburban areas to ensure communities, regardless of size, can access technological advancements.

“The pandemic magnified the importance of expansive and reliable broadband technology as so many Americans found themselves working and learning from home.

“Mr. Chairman, thank you again for holding this hearing. Let’s get to work in a bipartisan way to maintain, modernize and expand America’s infrastructure.

“I thank the witnesses for their willingness to participate in today’s hearing.”

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