

September 8th, 2011

"Thank you Mr. Chairman. Unfortunately, the bill before the Subcommittee today presents us with a completely inadequate allocation that ignores our nation's jobs-crisis and the drastic need for infrastructure investment.

"We were all discouraged to see the most recent jobs report indicating no job growth for the month of August. With stimulus funds exhausted, federal agency budgets either reduced or frozen, and states and local governments laying off workers in record numbers, economists have warned of a potential double-dip recession.

"Despite these warnings, the Republican majority has once again decided to double down on its bogus 'cut and grow' economic theory and has proposed a bill that drastically slashes infrastructure funding. Tonight the President will present his plan to create jobs across the country and we are threatening to cut highway, transit, and housing programs that will eliminate over 600,000 construction jobs next year. This is mindless budget slashing. It is my belief, that instead of collecting unemployment checks, our construction workers should be collecting paychecks while rebuilding our Nation's crumbling infrastructure.

"The American Society of Civil Engineers gives our roads and highway infrastructure a grade of "D-" while economists, organized labor, and even the U.S. Chamber of Commerce concur that infrastructure investments are immediately necessary. However, the response from the Majority is to propose highway funding at levels not seen since 2000.

"Housing funding also comes under the axe in this bill. By cutting the Public Housing Capital Fund by \$540 million, and completely eliminating the HOPE VI program, we will only exacerbate a ballooning backlog in necessary improvements to our most blighted communities. These are the low-hanging fruit of national projects that could be started immediately putting thousands of unemployed construction workers and tradesmen back to work.

"I do appreciate that Chairman Latham has addressed some priorities from our side of the aisle. I appreciate the full-funding of the Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (VASH) program which provides much needed long-term housing to homeless veterans. The bill also ensures that critical aspects of the Federal Aviation Administration's Next Generation Air Transportation System (NextGen) and the Commercial Aviation Alternative Fuels Initiative will move forward.

"Despite these gestures, I strongly urge my colleagues to oppose this bill. As our economy struggles and unemployment remains stubbornly high, I cannot support a bill that completely disregards the jobs and infrastructure crisis in this country."