



Statement of

The Honorable Tim Walz, Governor of Minnesota

Before the

**House Committee on
Transportation and Infrastructure**

On

**“The Cost of Doing Nothing:
Why Investing in Our Nation’s Infrastructure
Cannot Wait”**

February 7, 2019

Chairman DeFazio, Ranking Member Graves, and members of the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, thank you for inviting me to testify today on behalf of the National Governors Association (NGA) and the people of Minnesota. I had the privilege of serving on this committee for years.

Governors made investing in our nation's infrastructure a top priority in 2019 and for the 116th Congress.

Infrastructure is the foundation states are built upon. It impacts everything from economic development and global competitiveness, to our quality of life, safety, environment and resiliency. Governors have taken action to enhance infrastructure, including creating new and increasing existing funding streams, advancing public private partnerships, addressing regulatory delays, improving transparency and promoting innovation.

I'd like to highlight several important points this morning:

- No single stream of revenue or approach to financing will address all the gaps. States need a comprehensive approach that allows for leveraging a variety of funding sources and flexibility to match the right tool with each project. States succeed when there is certainty and stability in long-term federal resources ensuring workforce and economic vitality.
- We must fix and expand existing infrastructure and invest in resiliency and security to modernize it for future generations. We must attend to needs across our rural, urban and suburban areas. Infrastructure encompasses more than roads and bridges. It also includes city and community development, transit, seaports and airports, inland waterways and electric vehicle charging networks. It involves water and wastewater, the energy system, electricity grid and power plants, public buildings and advanced communications networks. Investments in projects of regional and national significance advance overall global competitiveness.
- We must recognize how all these pieces fit together. I was in Hallock a few weeks ago—a town of less than 1,000 people in the far Northwest corner of Minnesota. In the middle of a field off a dirt road, there is something you wouldn't expect to see: a liquor distillery. The owner of this distillery talked to me about the importance of repairing roads and bridges in her area, but also about the need for good transit in the cities for her urban customers to buy her product. She knows that when the Twin Cities thrive, Hallock thrives, and when Hallock thrives, the Twin Cities thrive.
- Governors support federal actions that streamline project delivery, reduce approval and completion times, and increase transparency., but also achieve the intent that underlies critical environmental, planning, design, and procurement reviews. States believe that federal infrastructure program reforms are the most

effective when they promote state flexibility by omitting unnecessary federal requirements.

- Governors believe that innovative technologies should be embraced to achieve resiliency, security and efficiency. Infrastructure should incorporate new capabilities related to increasing connectivity, autonomy, digital information and electrification. States are leading the way in embracing new practices and technologies that provide innovative solutions to traditional infrastructure needs; federal investments should be integrated and reward positive, evidence-based outcomes.
- I am here today to highlight needs and planning efforts that we have underway in Minnesota, and to ask Congress to pass an infrastructure package that provides states with the certainty needed to budget and plan for the future. We also ask that Congress provide states with the flexibility needed to determine how best to use the federal dollars that we receive.

The State of Infrastructure in Minnesota

Transportation

On August 1, 2007, 111 cars sat in traffic on the I-35W bridge over the Mississippi River in Minneapolis during the evening rush hour. They were filled with people going about their everyday lives, unconcerned about the infrastructure surrounding them. They were headed out for a night of fun at a Minnesota Twins game; they were schoolkids returning from a summer field trip; they were folks just trying to get home from work.

At 6:05 p.m., their lives changed forever when our inability to keep up with our infrastructure needs resulted in the catastrophic collapse of the bridge. Thirteen people lost their lives that day, and 145 more were injured.

Despite this highly visible, utterly obvious signal that we needed to do something to repair and replace our transportation infrastructure, it took a veto override from the legislature to pass a five cent state gas tax increase the following year. It was nonsensical then, and it shouldn't take another tragedy for us to take care of our infrastructure needs now.

Minnesota has the fifth largest road system in the United States, despite being ranked 22nd in population. We pride ourselves on our wide expanses of wilderness, farmland, our regional centers, and our metropolitan area—but there's a lot of roads connecting everything that makes Minnesota great.

But Minnesota's roads are in rough shape. Our most recent State Highway Improvement Plan identified billions of dollars in needs—Over the next 20 years, Minnesotans will need to come up with \$13.44 billion to maintain our pavements; \$2.65 billion to maintain our bridges and \$3.35 billion for all the culverts, drainage ditches and signage that make

our transportation system work. That doesn't even consider all modes of transportation—our transit, bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure that's growing in need.

Minnesotans are willing to pay their fair share when they know it is going to good use—like their roads, bridges, and transit. I saw it over the past two years while working to win Minnesotans' trust and become Governor. I unapologetically told Minnesotans over and over that we need to raise the gas tax, and that it would be a top priority for me if I took office.

In a few weeks when I unveil my budget as other governors will also, I will propose a comprehensive transportation finance package, addressing all modes of transportation, and improving the lives of all Minnesotans. We'll spend that increased revenue responsibly—benefitting the greatest number of people while keeping an eye on how efficiently we maximize our resources, and constantly looking for innovative ways to improve our infrastructure as we move toward new ways of financing our transportation system.

Minnesotans know they get what they pay for, and I am confident they will support this measure to improve our roads, ensure businesses can get their goods to market, and prevent a tragedy like the 35W Bridge collapse from ever happening again.

The Costs of Doing Nothing and a Path Forward

While not all of my perspectives are universally shared by all the nation's governors, we do all agree that the federal government can be a great partner, especially when it comes to efficiencies and innovation. Federal programs and funding should provide maximum flexibility to the states for implementation and innovation because of our diversity of geography, population and priorities.

The National Governors Association looks forward to continuing to engage with our federal partners and will be highlighting the need for infrastructure investment throughout the year. In fact, later this month on February 23, we will be hosting a roundtable discussion on infrastructure during our annual Winter Meeting, which brings together the nation's 55 governors to discuss the most pressing issues facing the states and territories.

On behalf of the nation's governors and the people of Minnesota, thank you for the opportunity to testify.

I would be happy to answer questions at the appropriate time.

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