



June 17, 2020

The Honorable Peter DeFazio  
Chairman  
U.S. House Committee on Transportation  
& Infrastructure  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Sam Graves  
Ranking Member  
U.S. House Committee on Transportation  
& Infrastructure  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman DeFazio, Ranking Member Graves and Members of the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure:

On behalf of Associated Builders and Contractors, a national construction industry trade association with 69 chapters representing more than 21,000 members, I write to express our appreciation for the Committee's efforts to enact legislation that can improve our nation's surface transportation infrastructure. Ahead of the full committee markup of H.R. 2, the INVEST in America Act, ABC appreciates the opportunity to provide the committee with additional insight into issues facing the construction industry and policies that can further ensure the best use of taxpayer dollars to support our nation's critical infrastructure.

ABC believes that the surface transportation reauthorization is essential and will provide a path forward on the essential infrastructure that is needed to assist in the recovery of the American economy. While ABC supports increased financing for surface transportation infrastructure programs, as the committee considers the INVEST in America Act, ABC is concerned that the proposal as written does not include several essential priorities of the construction industry. These priorities include reducing costly and ineffective regulations, increasing competition and addressing the construction industry's skilled worker shortage, all of which can help bring critical construction projects to market in a more economical and efficient manner.

ABC urges the committee to consider supporting the STARTER Act to be offered as an amendment to the underlying bill. Most notably, this alternative bill would reduce costly and overly burdensome regulations through improvements to the federal permitting and environmental review process, making it more efficient for major infrastructure projects by enacting sensible reforms such as the codification of the President's One Federal Decision Executive Order 13807 and modernizing the federal environmental review and permitting process under the National Environmental Policy Act.

Any infrastructure proposal must encourage fair and open competition for federal projects and prevent the inclusion of government-mandated project labor agreements. Allowing all qualified contractors to compete on a level playing field based on merit, experience, quality and safety will help to deliver the highest quality projects at the best cost to taxpayers.

Additionally, ABC is concerned with proposals that would require the application of federal Davis-Bacon Act requirements to state and locally led projects, which could have a chilling impact on competition, particularly for small businesses throughout the country. At a time when small construction businesses are struggling to maintain operations during the ongoing COVID-19 health crisis, additional burdensome cost requirements would limit their ability to benefit from critical funds for state and local projects.

ABC also urges Congress to enhance construction workforce development opportunities. The federal government should commit to supporting and defending an “all- of-the-above” strategy for skill development where workers and employers have the freedom to choose the best way to educate construction employees that maximizes innovation to achieve world-class safety and productivity.

A significant investment in federal and federally assisted construction accounts and programs will not only sustain economic activity during this public health crisis, but also accelerate the economic recovery efforts after the immediate effects of the coronavirus have passed. An increase in construction demand generated by a significant infrastructure investment would [create](#) thousands of jobs in the construction industry, which [shed](#) nearly one million jobs in April, before [adding](#) back more than 460,000 in May. An infrastructure investment is much-needed for the construction industry, which will see construction spending likely to hold up over the next year or so based on ABC’s [Construction Backlog Indicator](#). However, the industry still needs additional construction workers going forward, as before the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, [needed to hire](#) an additional 550,000 workers in 2020.

Finally, ABC would also like to express our continued commitment to building taxpayer-funded projects with the highest standards of safety and quality, and we stand ready for the opportunity to build and maintain America’s water infrastructure to the benefit of the communities that it will serve.

We thank you for your leadership and look forward to working with you to address the critical infrastructure needs of our nation during this difficult time.

Sincerely,



Kristen Swearingen  
Vice President, Legislative & Political Affairs

CC:

The Honorable John Barrasso  
Chairman  
U.S. Senate Committee on Environment  
and Public Works  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Tom Carper  
Ranking Member  
U.S. Senate Committee on Environment  
and Public Works  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, DC 20510