

Ohioans know how we let our infrastructure languish for far too long. They talked to Congress for years, trying to get Washington to listen.

Presidents of both parties promised infrastructure investment. It took this president and this Congress to deliver.

Some of the most important work we've done this Congress in the Banking & Housing Committee is writing the most significant investment ever in public transit under the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law.

But it's not just about the numbers – it's about what that investment will do, and how this will matter in people's lives.

It's going to mean transit agencies can run more buses and trains, more often, in more neighborhoods.

Last year, Darryl Haley with Cincinnati Metro testified at our first hearing of the year on transit. He talked about one worker he knows at a restaurant in suburban Cincinnati – she had to spend her entire day's paycheck on an Uber to get to work, because her regular bus didn't run on Sundays.

But she could not miss her shift without risking her job. The bus didn't come when she needed it, and that prevented an entire day's hard work from paying off. And it happens to her almost every single week.

With the infrastructure bill, we have the potential to change the lives of workers like her. We can run buses on Sundays. We can run trains more often. We can add routes. We can add stops.

That's going to make it faster and easier for people who already use public transit to get to work. It's going to open up new job opportunities, when people aren't limited by where the bus or the train runs.

And it's going to going to make subways and buses and streetcars a viable option for the first time for new riders.

Right now, so many families are feeling the pain of high gas prices because of Russia's attack on Ukraine.

They have no choice but to pay those high prices, because they have to get to work, they have to get to school, they have to get to the grocery store.

But if there's a reliable bus or train, workers won't have to choose between paying for gas or making rent.

This is going to make such a difference – especially in so many communities that haven’t had reliable transit. It’s the Black and brown communities who have been historically cut off from job centers. It’s rural areas where walking isn’t an option.

For our nation’s seniors, a van or bus from the local transit service is a lifeline to the doctor or the grocery store or church.

And because of the work we did on this committee, not only are we going to run buses more often, they’re going to be cleaner, newer, and safer buses.

More communities are going to be able to get new, state of the art zero-emission buses on the roads. That’s going to fight climate change and it’s going to clean up the air in our communities.

The Administration is already accepting applications for the zero emission bus grants we passed.

I’ve seen how Ohio agencies like LakeTran, SARTA and COTA are leading the country in deploying these pollution-free buses. Over the coming year, we’re going to see them in communities all over the state and the country.

And we made sure that workers will get the training they need to work on these new buses.

On this committee and under this president, workers will always – always – have a seat at the table.

I want to quickly thank the members of our Committee for their work to get this done.

Republican Ranking Member Toomey and I don’t see eye-to-eye on many issues, but we were able to reach agreement to reauthorize Federal Transit Administration programs.

We can both be proud that cities like Cleveland and Philadelphia can replace rail cars that date back to the Carter Administration.

Our Housing and Transit Subcommittee Chair Tina Smith and the subcommittee’s ranking member, Senator Rounds, did great work to improve rural transit and tribal transit.

Senator Menendez and Senator Reed continue to be leaders in fighting for a fair share of funds for transit.

Senator Tester, Senator Warner and Senator Sinema played a key role in ensuring the Committee’s transit title moved forward in the bipartisan negotiations, working with the Republican members of the bipartisan group.

Senator Warner and Senator Van Hollen fought to reauthorize funds for “America’s Subway,” the Washington, DC Metro system, and Senator Van Hollen’s legislation to improve agency safety plans gives workers a stronger voice in safety matters.

Senators Warnock and Ossoff helped us fight for better bus rapid transit and better planning, and Senator Cortez Masto contributed provisions to link transportation planning with housing needs.

I also want to thank Senator Warren and other members of our caucus who have kept advocating for zero-emission buses.

After the difficult times of the pandemic, the future for public transit and for our infrastructure is finally brighter.

I will spend the coming months working with Ohio cities and townships and counties and villages to make sure that every community knows all the opportunities available to them to improve their transit systems.

I know many of my colleagues will be doing the same. I look forward to hearing from our witnesses today about all the potential for job creation and economic growth we can unleash.