

We are honored today to welcome Secretary Marcia Fudge of the Department of Housing and Urban Development and Secretary Pete Buttigieg of the Department of Transportation.

President Biden promised an Administration that reflects the country it serves, and we are lucky to have two Cabinet departments led by former mayors from the industrial heartland.

Mayors know better than most how, for decades, an economy centered on Wall Street has left American cities, towns, and rural areas to fend for themselves.

We've seen the damage: housing that poisons our kids with lead paint and mold. Homes bought up by rich outside investors and left empty to fall into disrepair. Roads and bridges that are falling apart. And neighborhoods and workers that are cut off from opportunity.

Now, we have a once-in-a-generation opportunity to rebuild our country's infrastructure.

The investments we can make through HUD and DOT can bring down the cost of housing and transportation for workers and their families.

These are the costs that matter to most people's lives – your rent, your mortgage, your utilities, your car payment or your bus fare.

And these investments will create jobs and grow local economies. When work has dignity, everyone can afford housing and afford to get to work.

Over the past few months, this Committee has heard from leaders in housing and public transportation – not only experts in Washington, but local leaders who understand what communities really need to grow. They have illustrated how decades of underinvestment in our nation's housing and transit have set us back.

It's common sense – when we don't invest in the infrastructure that a modern economy requires, we lose out to our competitors. Communities stagnate or, in the memorable words of our colleague from Montana, dry up. Inequality gets worse, pollution harms families, and jobs and prosperity flow to only a small number of wealthy cities – or they move out of the country altogether.

Rural communities have not gotten the investment they need to produce enough housing for local families, bridges are in poor condition, and public transit providers need continued help to serve the one million rural households who don't have a car—a number that is only growing as baby boomers age.

And all of these problems are often at their most persistent in Black and brown neighborhoods that have never had transformative federal investment in their communities.

As we discussed at our hearing on the legacy of redlining, we are still living in communities we built in the 20th Century, with the biases of the time.

It's time to invest in creating the communities that will meet the needs of the country in the 21st Century. And this time, we cannot leave anyone behind. We will rebuild our communities to work for everyone.

The American Jobs Plan is a bold effort to reverse decades of neglect, to rebuild, and to put in place the foundation for a 21st century economy, where people have the jobs and the economic security to raise a family, to choose the community they want to live in, to start a small business.

It would produce, preserve, and retrofit over two million affordable homes, address the huge backlog of capital needs in public housing, and make our homes more energy efficient to bring down utility costs—all while creating job opportunities in the building trades and other sectors.

The American Jobs Plan would construct new bus rapid transit lines in Columbus, Cincinnati, and other cities in all regions of the country. It would finally tackle the repair backlog in the transit industry that is now estimated to be more than \$105 billion.

President Biden and I also agree on the need to replace aging transit buses with zero-emissions vehicles made right here in America. The Jobs Plan would allow us to replace 50,000 buses.

The Administration also recognizes the importance of ensuring that the investments in housing and transit work together, and of encouraging our communities to think about how they can help make it affordable for families to live there.

We know when a business decides where to build a new manufacturing facility, or a young family is deciding whether to relocate for a new job, they don't only consider one factor – they think about how they'll get to work, how long will the commute be, will their whole paycheck get eaten up by rent or the mortgage, is there broadband at home, is there childcare nearby they can afford.

All of these pieces fit together, and communities need all of them if they want to thrive.

While much of today's conversation will focus on the housing and transit investments in our Committee's jurisdiction, we must tackle ALL of these critical investments.

The Brent Spence Bridge over the Ohio River between Cincinnati and Northern Kentucky carries approximately 3 percent of our nation's GDP, but the bridge is dangerously outdated.

And Brent Spence is far from the only one – our Committee members' states have thousands of large and small bridges in need of repair, and those bridges carry millions of cars and buses every day.

I look forward to working with Secretary Buttigieg and my bipartisan partners in the Bridge Investment Act to make sure that Congress finally tackles overdue bridge projects.

And we call this the American Jobs Plan for a reason –almost all of these are jobs cannot be shipped overseas – you can't repair an American railroad track or an American bridge from China.

We're going to build new buses and rail cars and homes in America, with American raw materials and American union workers.

The president called this a "blue collar blueprint to rebuild America." He's right.

We need bold action to rebuild our infrastructure, to protect our communities from climate disasters, and to put Americans to work in good-paying jobs.

The former mayors here today know the pride people take in their neighborhoods and their hometowns. People want to see their communities thrive and grow, they want job opportunities for their kids, they want transportation and housing options they can afford.

And local leaders, of both parties, are desperate for the resources and support to make those dreams a reality. For decades, they've watched Washington point to soaring stock prices as evidence the economy is doing well – but that Wall Street wealth never translated into investment in their own Main Streets.

We are changing that approach, starting now.

I look forward to working with our witnesses today to invest in the people and the places that make our country work. Welcome to Secretary Marcia Fudge and Secretary Pete Buttigieg.