

## **Hearing on “21st Century Communities: Local Leaders on the Infrastructure Needs Facing America’s States, Cities, and Towns”**

**June 15, 2021**

Today we’re joined by local leaders who represent a cross section of the country.

Whether it’s an old industrial city or a college town, whether it’s Indian Country or Appalachia, local leaders understand how proud people are of their hometowns.

They want their town to be successful, they want their communities to grow and attract jobs. They don’t want families to be told to pick up and leave to find better opportunities. They don’t want to lose workers forced out by rising housing costs.

And Mayors also know the many opportunities we can unleash, if we make a once-in-a-generation investment to rebuild our country’s infrastructure.

They know what their communities need: They know the transit project that would revitalize a neglected neighborhood and bring new residents and customers to Main Street.

They know where there are shovel-ready projects that would build new houses workers can actually afford.

They know where lead pipes and lead paint are still poisoning kids today, in America in the year 2021 – and they know the Building Trades workers that are ready to get to work replacing those water lines and retrofitting those homes.

And mayors understand how all of these pieces fit together. Jobs and infrastructure are inseparable – you can’t create the former without the latter.

We know when a business decides where to build a new plant or office, they look at the infrastructure– they want to know if there is broadband, if there are homes their workers can afford, if there is a bus or a train that runs nearby.

When a young family is deciding whether to relocate for a new job, they think about how they’ll get to work, how long will the commute be, whether their whole paycheck will get eaten up by rent or the mortgage.

These issues all intersect – and while they may look different in Bozeman and Akron and Tempe, we know they are national problems. Mayors and city councils and county commissions can do a lot of good – but they can’t do it all on their own.

When we electrified the country – from the plains to Appalachia to the Deep South – we didn’t ask each individual mayor to come up with their own grid or build their own dam.

When we built the interstate highway system, we didn’t expect every county to foot the bill for its stretch of road.

We became the world’s largest economy, with the strongest middle class, because we came together to invest in great national projects that joined us all together as one country.

And we did not force workers and their families to foot the bill.

The corporations that rely on our public goods to make their vast, growing profits should contribute to the upkeep.

While stock buybacks climb and corporate profits soar, Americans' states, cities, and towns scrape by each year, making hard choices about their budgets.

They don't want to shortchange public safety, so they wait another year to replace aging buses. They don't want to cut teacher salaries and lose talent, so there's no money to turn dilapidated properties into affordable homes in their neighborhoods.

Over and over, I hear the same thing from leaders in places large and small, rural and urban: to attract good jobs, they need more resources.

They need homes their workers can afford, and ways for them to get to work.

Today, we'll hear from Mayor Daniel Horrigan, from Akron, Ohio – a proud Midwestern city that has endured decades of a tax and trade policy that encouraged its businesses to shut down production in Ohio, and move good-paying union jobs abroad, where companies can pay lower wages and exploit workers.

That outsourcing doesn't just affect individual workers and their families – as Mayor Horrigan will tell you, it erodes the tax base, making it that much harder for cities to build the infrastructure that would draw in new investment.

We'll also hear from Tempe, Arizona Mayor Corey Woods, who is working to tackle their affordable housing shortage and showing the country how new transit innovation isn't just for big coastal cities – that investment has the potential to spur growth in Sunbelt cities, and across the country.

And we'll hear from Mayor Cyndy Andrus of Bozeman, Montana. She'll tell you that high housing prices aren't just a problem in wealthy neighborhoods in big cities – her city's housing shortage is driving up home prices and leaving families without options.

All of these mayors, and the local leaders I talk to in Ohio, will tell you they've tried to make it on their own because they have to – not because they want to, not because they don't need investment.

They want to be part of a broad national project. They want to build thriving, equitable and resilient communities.

It's time for all our communities, and the workers and the families that call them home, to share in our country's prosperity.

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