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June 29, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi, Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy, Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Peter Defazio, Chairman
Transportation and Infrastructure Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

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

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Minority Leader McCarthy, Chairman DeFazio, Ranking Member Graves:

As the House prepares to debate infrastructure legislation, The Pew Charitable Trusts would like to highlight our strong support for elements within the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee's Invest in America Act which are now part of H.R. 2, The Moving Forward Act. The committee's reauthorization legislation makes significant strides to incorporate important resilience provisions in many aspects of transportation planning and construction; the bill provides critical new funding for roads in national parks as well as on other public lands; and brings much needed attention to the problem of vehicle-caused wildlife mortality by authorizing \$300 million over five years to address this growing safety issue.

Flood Resilience

Pew applauds the inclusion of resilience provisions that encourage communities and states to take systematic, forward-looking approaches toward increasing the ability of the nation's transportation infrastructure to withstand flooding and other natural disasters.

The incorporation of resilience among the priorities and eligible activities of existing programs, such as the National Highway Performance Program and the Surface Transportation Program, can enhance the long-term sustainability and performance of the nation's transportation assets.

The \$6.25 billion in funding for a new pre-disaster mitigation program will help regions and states unlock untapped potential to assess, plan for, and address resilience vulnerabilities as part of their long-range transportation improvement plans. The program's incorporation of natural infrastructure, resilience over the design life of projects, and relocation or construction of alternatives to repeatedly damaged facilities will benefit the return-on-investment of funded projects.

Additionally, the establishment of a pre-disaster hazard mitigation pilot program for Federal-aid highways has the potential to provide significant resources for cost-effective projects that reduce future risk to states and localities recently impacted by natural disasters.

National Parks

Pew works to protect the natural and cultural resources within our national parks by focusing on reducing the nearly \$12 billion repair backlog with the National Park System (NPS), more than half of which is attributed to transportation-related assets. The NPS estimates that it requires almost \$4.8 billion to address its highest and high priority transportation deferred maintenance, which are projects associated with paved roads, road bridges and tunnels, and parking lots. We commend the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee's inclusion of \$1,999,494,147 over five years for the National Park Service Federal Lands Transportation Program.

Many of NPS' road repair projects exceed core agency funding, which is why it is critical that the Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act included funding for the Nationally Significant Federal Lands and Tribal Projects Program. Federal public land agencies and tribes compete for these program funds, which are appropriated annually and capped at \$100 million for each fiscal year. The program was so popular during its initial grant cycle in fiscal year 2018 that 39 grant applications totaling \$2.26 billion were received. The INVEST Act's newly renamed Federal Lands and Tribal Major Projects Program comes closer to fulfilling this significant need by including \$400 million annually in dedicated funding for FY2022-2025. This will allow NPS to better plan and manage complex road projects that facilitate visitor access and safety.

Wildlife Crossings

We also appreciate the opportunity to address Section 1620 of the INVEST Act, regarding wildlife crossings. Pew is focused on identifying and conserving wildlife migrations across the Western U.S. while making our roads and highways safer for drivers and animals alike. Annually, wildlife-vehicle collisions cost American drivers \$8 billion in repair and medical expenses while killing millions of animals on our roads and highways. Many of these collisions, particularly in Western states, occur in discrete "hotspots" where species such as mule deer or elk regularly migrate between summer and winter ranges. Better tracking methodologies by wildlife agencies in combination with improved reporting by state departments of transportation have, in recent years, pinpointed problem areas. State and federal agencies are now armed with the data and information that can be used to mitigate this problem, in turn saving human lives and conserving our precious wildlife resources.

Where solutions such as wildlife overpasses or underpasses have been employed, it is now common to observe an 80-90% reduction in wildlife-vehicle collisions, such as is the case with projects in stretches of Colorado's State Highway 9, Wyoming's State Highway 191, and Oregon's State Highway 97 among many others. Further, a Pew commissioned science brief found that in areas where five or more deer are struck each year, it costs taxpayers more to do nothing compared to solving the problem by installing wildlife crossings.

The wildlife crossings provision is a significant and positive step forward in empowering states with the resources necessary to address the issue of wildlife-vehicle collisions. Pew's research does show that the effectiveness of this provision would be enhanced by disbursing the funds through a competitive grants program rather than through an apportionment calculation so that funds would be allocated to projects where the maximum number of human fatalities, injuries, and wildlife losses can be mitigated. Again, thank you for including these important provisions in the INVEST Act, and we look forward to their legislative progress as part of H.R. 2. Please do not hesitate to reach out with questions to me at twathen@pewtrusts.org or Geoffrey Brown, director of government relations at gbrown@pewtrusts.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Thomas Wathen". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the beginning and a loop at the end.

Thomas Wathen
Vice President, Environment Programs
The Pew Charitable Trusts