

February 24th, 2021

The Honorable Thomas Carper
Chairman of the Senate Committee on
Environment and Public Works
513 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Shelley Moore Capito
Ranking Member on the Senate Committee on
Environment and Public Works
172 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Carper and Ranking Member Capito,

On behalf of the over 400-member companies of the National Stone, Sand & Gravel Association (NSSGA), I welcome today's hearing, titled *"Building Back Better: Investing in Transportation while Addressing Climate Change, Improving Equity, and Fostering Economic Growth and Innovation."* As your committee understands well, a robust, multi-year surface transportation reauthorization is the most effective legislative tool to combat the economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic by putting tens of thousands of Americans back to work and recapturing our national economic competitiveness. Today's hearing will underscore these benefits and spur productive debate regarding the best paths forward for meaningful infrastructure investment.

NSSGA is the leading advocate and resource for the aggregates industry, who provides the critical raw materials found in virtually every surface transportation project - roads, highways, bridges, runways, pipelines and much more. Our membership represents more than 90 percent of the crushed stone and 70 percent of the sand and gravel produced annually in the United States. We are eager that your committee is beginning work to address our overutilized and underfunded infrastructure network by passing long-term surface transportation reauthorization before the current FAST Act one-year extension expires on September 30th.

As you know well, short-term extensions only serve to delay timely projects; increase over project costs; and eliminate any hopes of long-term planning and certainty for all local, state and federal partners. Congress needs to deliver a robust, multi-year bill that eliminate these obstacles and invests in the infrastructure networks millions of Americans depend upon every day. Echoing the hearing's title, NSSGA loudly supports "Building Back Better" via a surface transportation reauthorization bill that will address the over \$800 billion backlog of vital public works projects, which must be addressed in order to provide the motoring public safe and efficient roads, bridges and highways¹. Our national economy is already handicapped due the COVID-19 pandemic and investing in our crumbling infrastructure network will improve our local and national economy.

The need for federal infrastructure investment is even more critical when you consider that state Department of Transportation agencies (DOTs) have had to absorb significant revenue declines due to the pandemic. Many of these agencies lost upwards of 40 percent of their projected 2020 revenues at the onset of the pandemic, and it is projected State DOTs will still need roughly \$18B in federal relief over the next four fiscal years. Thankfully, many on this committee supported a bi-partisan Dear Colleague letter last summer that ultimately resulted in \$10B for State DOTs in the end-of-year package

¹ <https://www.infrastructurereportcard.org/cat-item/roads/>

in December but continuing this support will leverage whatever highway reauthorization Congress passes. Ignoring the call to support state DOTs will blunt any infrastructure recovery package or highway reauthorization bill - no matter its size and scope - and will set back our country's infrastructure needs significantly. Despite these immense challenges, your committee is well positioned to tackle such obstacles with pragmatism and compromise.

Last Congress, this Committee achieved a rare feat, advancing major bills unanimously like *America's Transportation and Infrastructure Act (ATIA)*, and while ATIA did not pass the Senate before the FAST Act expired, that bill establishes strong, bi-partisan cooperation for your colleagues in the 117th. We look forward to the priorities and direction each of you will take as a new bill emerges this spring, and NSSGA is available as a resource in whatever capacity to help reach that goal.

Lastly, aggregate sustainability must be a critical component of any surface transportation reauthorization package. The more planning and focus on maintaining locally sourced aggregate material, the more we can improve on project delivery, cost efficiency and mitigate environmental impacts. NSSGA supports including text of the recently reintroduced ROCKS Act – HR 611, which would establish a working group of various partners at the federal, state and local level who would examine aggregate availability and future needs as infrastructure planning develops in the coming years.

America's economic recovery is synonymous with infrastructure investment, and NSSGA is here to advance that message throughout Congress. I appreciate your committee's leadership, advancing sound infrastructure policies and thank you for your consideration. As you continue to examine a reauthorization bill and other matters relevant to the aggregates industry, please consider NSSGA as a resource. Thank you again for your time and interest on this critical issue.

Sincerely,



Michael W. Johnson
President and CEO
National Stone, Sand and Gravel Association

cc: Members of the Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works