



AMERICAN PUBLIC WORKS ASSOCIATION

Your Comprehensive  
Public Works Resource

[www.apwa.net](http://www.apwa.net)

1200 Main Street, Suite 1400  
Kansas City, MO 64105-2100  
816-472-6100 800-848-APWA  
fax 816-472-1610

25 Massachusetts Avenue, NW  
Suite 500A  
Washington, DC 20001  
202-408-9541

June 9, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Speaker of the House  
U.S. House of Representatives

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Majority Leader  
U.S. Senate

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy  
Minority Leader  
U.S. House of Representatives

The Honorable Charles E. Schumer  
Minority Leader  
U.S. Senate

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Leader McConnell, Leader McCarthy, and Leader Schumer:

On behalf of the more than 30,000 members of the American Public Works Association (APWA), we are writing today to share our support for including broad infrastructure investment in a future COVID-19 recovery package. APWA very much appreciates the actions of Congress over recent months in swiftly passing four legislative packages responding to the pandemic, the needs of our citizens, and supporting state and local governments responsible for providing essential services across the country.

APWA membership includes personnel from local, county, state, and federal level agencies, as well as from the private sector. Our members have direct oversight and responsibility for all facets of infrastructure including water, transportation, and emergency management. As you work to craft the next COVID-19 recovery package, we urge you to provide federal support for infrastructure investment across all of these sectors. During this time as we seek to move the nation forward past the pandemic, investment in our nation's critical infrastructure will be a key component, as it has been throughout our history, in boosting the economy and providing job opportunities to our citizens.

Specifically, APWA strongly supports the following infrastructure investments be included in a future COVID-19 package:

## **TRANSPORTATION**

- With the Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act expiring September 30, 2020, now is an opportunity to complete a reauthorization bill early;

PRESIDENT  
William E. (Bill) Spearman III, PE.

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER  
Scott D. Grayson



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- By all measures, the FAST Act has been a legislative success in having provided 5-years of funding certainty and investment increases. APWA calls for the next surface transportation reauthorization to be implemented for at least 6-years and include federal investment above FAST Act enacted levels;
- APWA's priority areas for the next reauthorization are funding, streamlining, and safety, and therefore strongly encourages Congress and the Trump Administration to:
  - Increase and index the federal motor fuel tax in the short-term to secure and sustain the Highway Trust Fund, while also implementing a vehicle-miles traveled program, or similar mechanism, for the future where all infrastructure users of all modes pay into the system;
  - Continue support for successful and proven programs such as the Federal Highway Administration's Every Day Counts, Traffic Incident Management, and the Transportation Alternatives Program, as each of these contribute to project efficiencies, the safety of incident responders, and the safety of pedestrians and the traveling public broadly;
  - APWA strongly supports a multi-modal transportation system and calls for continued strong support and robust funding to federal programs supporting increased investment in local bridges, and bridges not on the National Highway System, the High Risk Rural Roads Program, programs supporting operational improvements on highways, local streets, modernizing bus and rail transit, and for safe bikeways, pedestrian crossings and pathways, as well as airport improvements;
  - Continue programs such as the Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) grants, and the Infrastructure for Rebuilding America (INFRA) grants;
  - Continue the Transportation Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (TIFIA) program currently scheduled to expire with the FAST Act;
  - Finally, it is important that there continue to be investment in transportation technologies and advancements to support a modernized transportation network.

## WATER

- Federal assistance to cover costs associated with moratoriums on water service disconnections, or reconnections of delinquent accounts, that water systems have implemented in response to the pandemic;
- Grant no, or low-interest loan funding to help support utility operations at a time when revenues are dropping dramatically; and
- Inclusion of strong funding for utility providers through established water infrastructure investment programs like SRFs, WIFIA, USDA Rural Development, the Bureau of Reclamation's Title XVI-WIIN Water Reclamation and Reuse Program, and other water infrastructure grant programs to help fuel local economic activity while simultaneously strengthening America's infrastructure.

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## **EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT**

- Provide additional federal funding for the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Disaster Relief Fund (DRF);
- Provide additional federal funding for FEMA Grants to assist state, local, territorial, and tribal governments in the efforts to combat the COVID-19 pandemic.

During this time, public works professionals, designated as first responders through Presidential Policy Directive (PPD-8), are responsible for providing critical services that are imperative to the health of our communities to include monitoring the water supply, providing sanitation services, and coordinating with our emergency response partners. These types of public works services are necessary not only to daily life, but their importance is even greater during a public health crisis like what our country is facing currently.

Recently, APWA joined with over 170 local organizations in reaching out to Congress requesting additional federal support for local governments. Specifically calling for:

- \$500 billion over two years of federal aid for local governments;
- Fair and direct funding allocations to each and every local government, with no exclusions based on population;
- Equal funding overall for municipal governments and county governments; and
- Maximum flexibility for the eligible use of funds to address the budget consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic.

## **STATE & LOCAL GOVERNMENT VOICE**

State and local governments are the foundation of our country. It is this level of government and its personnel who interact with American citizens every day. Residents within communities throughout the U.S. have come to rely upon local government for essential services that ensure a high quality of life. These governments, through which public works is funded and overseen, will need the financial assistance and flexibility outlined above. Additionally, in any legislation that provides federal funding and resources for our nation's public works it is vital that the local perspective is incorporated into the drafting of any infrastructure bill. Moreover, any future legislation to combat the pandemic should enhance state and local control regarding public works projects as a key to successfully designing, maintaining, and operating our infrastructure.

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## **BROADBAND DEPLOYMENT AND PUBLIC RIGHT OF WAY**

The shelter-in-place orders issued by states during the COVID-19 pandemic have highlighted the need for increased broadband internet access throughout the country. With millions of Americans working from home, and who need to access critical services through internet connections, the lack of service in certain areas has become even more apparent during the pandemic. APWA supports the expansion of broadband internet access throughout the country. However, recent efforts to eliminate perceived regulatory barriers to the deployment of broadband infrastructure have seen a severe limiting of municipal and public works participation in this deployment process. Such a limitation jeopardizes the ability of municipalities and public works agencies to manage their right-of-way. APWA urges Congress to craft language that would help ensure local communities have a say in the deployment of broadband technologies, and that any regulations to govern these technologies are produced with equal representation from all stakeholders. As a standing policy, APWA opposes unfunded mandates and any effort to impede the appropriate use of public right-of-way and strongly encourages the federal government and industry to coordinate with state and local governments on all infrastructure projects, including installation of broadband internet technology.

Thank you for your consideration of the priorities outlined above. Please know APWA stands ready as a resource and partner in addressing the needs of our country through this current crisis, and into our future recovery. Please feel free to call on APWA if we can provide support or assistance by contacting APWA's Director of Government and Public Affairs Andrea Eales at (202) 218-6730.

Sincerely,

William E. (Bill) Spearman, III, P.E.  
APWA President

Scott D. Grayson, CAE  
APWA Chief Executive Officer

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William E. (Bill) Spearman III, PE.

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