

Bipartisan Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act: Advancing Economic and Public Health Opportunities for Communities of Color

A little over a month ago, the President announced the Bipartisan Infrastructure Framework – a bipartisan agreement to make largest long-term investment in our infrastructure and competitiveness in nearly a century. This week, the Senate is considering the Bipartisan Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, a once-in-a-generation investment in our infrastructure. The bipartisan infrastructure agreement will grow the economy, enhance our competitiveness, and make our economy more sustainable, resilient, and just.

The agreement will also create good-paying, union jobs. With the remainder of the President's Build Back Better Agenda, these investments will add, on average, around 2 million jobs per year over the course of the decade, while accelerating America's path to full employment and increasing labor force participation.

The Bipartisan Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act addresses economic disparities in our economy and the consequences of decades of disinvestment in America's infrastructure that have fallen most heavily on communities of color. Through critical investments, the legislation increases access to good-paying jobs, affordable high-speed internet, reliable public transit, clean drinking water and other resources to ensure communities of color get a fair shot at the American dream.

These critical investments are first steps in advancing equity and racial justice throughout our economy. The President believes additional investments are needed in our nation's caregiving infrastructure, housing supply, regional development, and workforce development programs to ensure that communities of color and other underserved communities can access economic opportunity and justice. And, earlier this summer in Tulsa, OK, President Biden announced a whole-of-government effort to increase the share of federal contracts going to small disadvantaged businesses by 50 percent over the next five years, leveraging the government's purchasing power to help more Americans realize their entrepreneurial dreams.

The Bipartisan Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act:

DELIVERS HIGH SPEED INTERNET TO EVERY AMERICAN HOUSEHOLD

There is a stark digital divide in America. Black families are 9% less likely to have high-speed internet than their white peers, and Latino Americans are 15% less likely. About 35% of individuals living on Tribal lands lack access to broadband service. Although studies suggest high levels of digital access for Asian Americans, these studies are often limited in scope and don't identify key inequities. For example, broadband access and affordability in the Pacific Islands has long been a challenge. During the COVID-19 pandemic, there were stories of kids sitting in McDonald's parking lots to log on to remote school in parts of the country. The President believes this is unacceptable.

The agreement's \$65 billion investment ensures every American has access to reliable high-speed internet with an historic investment in broadband infrastructure deployment, just as the federal government made a historic effort to provide electricity to every American nearly one

hundred years ago. This includes a \$2 billion investment in broadband in Tribal communities which were hit particularly hard by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The bill will also help lower prices for internet service by requiring funding recipients to offer a low-cost affordable plan, requiring providers to display a “Broadband Nutrition Label” that will help families comparison shop for a better deal, and by boosting competition in areas where existing providers aren’t providing adequate service.

ELIMINATES LEAD PIPES AND DELIVERS CLEAN DRINKING WATER TO EVERY HOUSEHOLD

Across the country, pipes and treatment plants are aging and polluted drinking water is endangering public health. There are up to 10 million homes with lead service lines and pipes. Children in up to 400,000 schools and child care facilities are at risk of exposure to lead. Across the country, families of color are at the highest risk for lead exposure at home and in schools. Communities of color in cities like Chicago, Milwaukee, and Newark are also at particular risk. For kids, higher exposure to lead can negatively affect academic performance, and can lead to cardiovascular disease later in life. By some estimates, each lead service line replaced at a cost of \$5,000 per line leads to \$22,000 in health savings.

The deal makes the largest investment in clean drinking water in American history, replacing all of the nation’s lead pipes and service lines. From rural towns to struggling cities, the deal invests in water infrastructure across America, including in Tribal Nations and disadvantaged communities that need it most. The deal also includes dedicated funding to deal with the dangerous chemical PFAS (per- and polyfluoroalkyl).

INVESTS IN MORE PUBLIC TRANSIT OPTIONS AND ADDRESSING THE BACKLOG OF REPAIRS

Asian American and African American workers commute by public transit at nearly 4 times the rate of white workers. For example, low-wage Black residents in Chicago spend 70 additional minutes commuting to work than their white peers. In New York City, the average Black resident spends 110 minutes more per week commuting to work than the average white resident.

The Framework’s historic investment in public transit – the largest federal investment in history – will reduce commute times and create more economic opportunities in communities of color. In addition, bus and transit workers are 31% Black and 19% Hispanic, compared to 12% and 18% respectively of the workforce overall.

The Bipartisan Infrastructure deal is the largest Federal investment in public transit in history, and devotes a larger share of funds from surface transportation reauthorization to transit in the history of the programs. It will repair and upgrade aging infrastructure, modernize bus and rail fleets, make stations accessible to all users, and bring transit service to new communities. It will replace thousands of transit vehicles, including buses, with clean, zero emission vehicles.

CREATES A FIRST-EVER PROGRAM TO RECONNECT COMMUNITIES DIVIDED BY INEQUITABLE TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

Significant portions of the interstate highway system were built through Black neighborhoods, destroying homes, schools, churches, and parks and causing lasting

disconnection and disinvestment for residents who stayed. More broadly, historic investments in transportation infrastructure, especially highway construction, cut too many Americans off from opportunity, dividing and demolishing communities, and perpetuating economic and racial injustices. The legislation creates a first-ever program to reconnect communities divided by transportation infrastructure. The program will fund planning, design, demolition, and reconstruction of street grids, parks, or other infrastructure. This is in addition to other major grant programs that could fund elements of these projects.

ELECTRIFY SCHOOL BUSES, IMPROVING THE AIR QUALITY FOR CHILDREN

The legislation will make a critical down payment on helping the more than 25 million children and thousands of bus drivers who breathe polluted air on their rides to and from school. Diesel air pollution is linked to asthma and other health problems that hurt our communities and cause students to miss school, particularly in communities of color and Tribal communities. The legislation will deliver thousands of electric school buses nationwide, helping school districts across the country buy clean, American-made, zero emission buses, replacing the yellow school bus fleet for America's children.

REMIEDIATES BROWNFIELD AND SUPERFUND SITES

Across America, 26% of Black Americans and 29% of Hispanic Americans live within 3 miles of a Superfund site, a higher percentage than for the overall population. Proximity to a Superfund site can lead to elevated levels of lead in children's blood. Recent studies demonstrate that cleaning up these sites can lead to a decrease in blood levels by approximately 13-26%.

The Bipartisan Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act provides the full American Jobs Plan funding level -- \$21 billion -- to create good-paying union jobs plugging orphan oil and gas wells, cleaning up abandoned mines, and remediating Brownfield and Superfund sites. As we transition to a clean energy future, the Bipartisan Infrastructure deal will begin to remedy economic injustice for communities across the country that have relied on the fossil fuel industry and have been affected most by the impacts of climate change and pollution, including rural communities and communities of color.

SAFEGUARDS COMMUNITIES OF COLOR FROM CLIMATE CRISES AND EXTREME WEATHER RISKS

People of color are more likely to live in areas most vulnerable to flooding and other climate change-related weather events. For example, in the wake of Hurricane Harvey, Black and Hispanic residents were twice as likely to report lost income. Tribal lands are significantly at risk to the effects of climate change and Alaska Natives are particularly vulnerable, as they face multiple climate impacts.

The legislation invests in helping communities build resilience to wildfires and floods through investments in forest management and upgrades to critical infrastructure -- like elevating buildings, roads, and bridges, hardening physical infrastructure, and winterizing the power grid. And, it will fund state and local infrastructure improvements and emergency response strategies, such as planning grants to support development of evacuation routes or upgrading community shelters. The legislation will also make it easier for low-income families to buy flood insurance.

INVESTS IN CLEAN ENERGY GRID TO MITIGATE THE DISPARATE IMPACTS OF POLLUTION ON COMMUNITIES OF COLOR

Black, Latino, Asian American and Pacific Islander, and Native communities are more likely to be burdened by pollution. Black people are almost three times more likely to die from asthma related causes than their white counterparts. And more than one in three -- or over 23 million -- Latinos in the U.S. live in counties where the air doesn't meet EPA public health standards for smog.

The legislation's roughly \$65 billion investment is the single largest investment in clean energy transmission in American history. It upgrades our power infrastructure, including by building thousands of miles of new, resilient transmission lines to facilitate the expansion of renewable energy. It creates a new Grid Deployment Authority, invests in research and development for advanced transmission and electricity distribution technologies, and promotes smart grid technologies that deliver flexibility and resilience. It invests in demonstration projects and research hubs for next generation technologies like advanced nuclear reactors, carbon capture, and clean hydrogen.