

A WEEK TO CHAMPION AMERICA'S INFRASTRUCTURE

# United For **Infrastructure** 2020

SEP 14-21 • #REUILDBETTER

## Message Guide

United for Infrastructure's message for 2020 is about the need not just to build any and all infrastructure...but to **#RebuildBetter**. Now in its eighth year, led by a coalition of labor, business, and policy organizations, and joined by hundreds of affiliates nationwide, United for Infrastructure brings many voices together to speak to the importance of our nation's critical infrastructure assets.

This year the COVID pandemic, its economic repercussions, and widespread discussions about systemic racial injustice have rocked every corner of our society. These compounding crises create unprecedented new challenges and exacerbate older weaknesses and inequities in our infrastructure. But this moment of reckoning also presents an opportunity to take stock and fight for the transportation, water, communications, and energy tools that every American deserves: safe and reliable transportation to cut down barriers to jobs and education and healthcare, 21<sup>st</sup> century supply chains that bringing food and goods to our doors even in the middle of a pandemic, and clean water and air-conditioning and high-speed internet in our homes.

**#RebuildBetter** means highlighting the role of essential infrastructure workers that keep our country safe and moving, even during a pandemic. **#RebuildBetter** means having an open and honest conversation about the infrastructure decisions of the past that have perpetuated inequities in communities of color – and what to do about it. **#RebuildBetter** means building resilient infrastructure that can help communities thrive even as a changing climate presents challenges of rising sea levels, severe storms, wildfires, and more pressures on fragile infrastructure systems.

Infrastructure investment is an urgent bipartisan issue that everyone can get behind. As the country falls deeper into a recession, we know that investing in infrastructure can play a crucial role in our recovery, creating both short-term and long-term jobs that support middle-class families and allow communities to thrive. When we invest in infrastructure, we invest in ourselves. More than 79 percent of voters believe it is extremely important that Congress and the Administration increase investment in public infrastructure.<sup>1</sup> In 2018, voters approved 77 percent of state and local infrastructure ballot measures, continuing a long trend of support for infrastructure investment.<sup>2</sup> People now understand the vast needs of our transit systems, roads, pipes, airports, water systems, and more, and they know we can do better.

We know the benefits of investing in infrastructure. Every \$1 invested in infrastructure generates \$3.70 in economic growth, while repairing and modernizing our nation's public infrastructure would add \$1,400 in income to the average household annually for the next 20 years.<sup>3</sup>

Meanwhile, we're already paying for our failure to fix, modernize, and re-imagine our infrastructure. We're paying in the 35,000 lives lost every year in car accidents – many of which could be avoided through better planning. We're paying in leaving far too many citizens unable to commute to jobs, school, and healthcare. We're paying in an average of 42 hours<sup>6</sup> per year of time spent in traffic – lost productivity, lost time with families, wasted fuel. We're paying in property devalued – and lost – due to

undermaintained dams and levees and flood control infrastructure. And we're paying out of our wallet: an additional \$9 every day for each American family,<sup>4</sup> and an average of \$533<sup>5</sup> per driver each year in avoidable car repairs. We're paying in higher water bills and consecutive hundred-year floods that push families out of their homes and businesses into bankruptcy. We're paying \$5,800<sup>7</sup> per employee for each day of disrupted water service to manufacturers and breweries and other water-reliant businesses.

Local and state leaders so often try to do the right thing: prioritizing key projects, securing community-level funding, and moving local infrastructure initiatives forward. But as the economic downturn sweeps the nation, states and cities and counties won't have the revenue to continue to support the infrastructure they have, let alone address systemic challenges. The scale of the infrastructure need we face demands bold action by the federal government to provide a national vision, thoughtful policy, and significant funding.

If this country is going to reclaim its position as a global leader and commit to taking care of ALL its people, we need a national-level infrastructure plan that offers a clear vision for the future. We have to identify what we've done wrong and where we've fallen short, come up with real plans to fix systemic failures and inequities, and fully commit to and fund an infrastructure plan to **#RebuildBetter**.