

CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NEIL L. BRADLEY
EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT &
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TO THE MEMBERS OF THE UNITED STATES SENATE:

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce strongly supports S. 2324, the “Federal Permitting Reform and Jobs Act,” which would reauthorize Title 41 of the Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act (FAST-41) of 2015 to help improve the efficiency and coordination of federal permitting decisions for critical infrastructure. **Members of Congress who cosponsor this legislation will receive credit for the Leadership component of the “How They Voted” scorecard.**

We fully support the fundamental environmental stewardship goals of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), and believe a more efficient NEPA process is needed like the one that this legislation would implement. Critical infrastructure projects are all too often buried in lengthy NEPA reviews that are both costly and delay the intended benefits that improved infrastructure can bring. It takes an average of 4.5 years to simply reach a “yes” or “no” decision on permits, and with some projects taking decades, accelerating this timeline should be a bipartisan goal.

To help support a timely and efficient permitting process for major infrastructure projects, FAST-41 created the Federal Permitting Improvement Steering Council (FPISC) to oversee the permitting process for covered projects. Removing the 2022 sunset of FAST-41 is incredibly important as it will allow the projects currently in the FPISC pipeline to continue to receive support, including many renewable energy projects. Without reauthorizing FIPSC, more than \$50 billion in infrastructure investments would be in jeopardy of a timely review.

Reauthorizing FAST-41 will also maintain the online “dashboard,” a helpful transparency tool to track the status of projects during the environmental review and permitting process. The dashboard documents the completion of each project milestone to show the progress made and help identify process roadblocks. Other provisions in the bill would help drive a better review process include a presumptive two year completion goal, requiring joint environmental impact statements when more than one federal agency is involved, and earlier identification of participating agencies.

The bill also allows for projects located on tribal lands or sponsored by an Indian Tribe or Native Corporation to have access to FPISC’s permitting process assistance. Harnessing the resources of FIPSC will help improve project delivery for Tribes, allowing for faster much needed infrastructure investments to encourage growth and increase opportunity. This would provide vital help to communities among the hardest-hit by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Federal Permitting Reform and Jobs Act would help build the economy of the future as well as provide well-paying jobs building more resilient highways and other infrastructure linking neighborhoods to businesses and job centers, and providing better access to clean water and affordable energy. As the U.S. is undergoing important conversations about equity, the predictability and transparency provided by FAST-41 can accelerate investment in infrastructure that will serve disadvantaged communities and create economic opportunities.

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce supports reauthorizing FAST-41 to help put people back to work and rebuild our critical infrastructure to meet our future needs. We applaud Senators Rob Portman, Kyrsten Sinema, Dan Sullivan, and Joe Manchin for their work on this important bipartisan bill, and we urge you to cosponsor this important legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Neil L. Bradley", with a large, stylized flourish at the end.

Neil L. Bradley