

# BIDEN INFRASTRUCTURE BILL RESPONSE

**Overview:** The infrastructure bill proposed by the administration of President Joe Biden represents the strongest proposal we have ever seen to invest in moving America forward towards a post-carbon future; we agree that clean drinking water, a renewables-supportive electric grid, high-speed broadband, child care, and related services are absolutely essential infrastructure. And yet, we feel that it has room for improvement. We suggest that every investment in the bill be subject to screening criteria that are developed to implement two lenses, a climate lens and a people lens.

## CLIMATE LENS

The climate lens must be used as a screening criteria, so that investments authorized by American taxpayers are not wasted on projects that will be obsolete or destroyed prior to the end of their design lifespan, or that will contribute towards making the problem worse in terms of the level of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. Towards this goal, every project funded through the infrastructure bill should demonstrate that it will:

1. Result in net emissions reductions;
2. Contribute towards carbon sequestration, largely through the planting and stewardship of trees and perennial plants that contribute towards healthy ecosystems
3. Be resilient in the face of climate-driven hazards that are expected to come within this current century
4. Be supportive of efforts to adapt American communities to allow them to thrive in a post-fossil-fuel economy
5. Be location efficient, supporting intensification of uses within existing communities to facilitate greater fiscal and environmental sustainability and maximize the value provided by funded projects through walkable, transit-supportive land use patterns

## PEOPLE LENS

The people lens should be more of a scoring criteria, one that is used to prioritize projects that result in places for people, rather than in facilities for cars at the expense of human communities. These scoring criteria should:

1. Support walkable, bike-able, transit-served human communities
2. Provide remedies to communities that experienced destruction as a result of past infrastructure investments, such as freeways that destroyed black communities in cities across America
3. Encourage community stabilization to prevent the displacement of residents and businesses when infrastructure investments are made as a part of the bill's funded programs and projects
4. Support preservation and restoration of natural lands, working lands and freshwater systems
5. Support fix-it-first and incremental approaches to bringing new transit service online using existing infrastructure first, which then gets upgraded later, over time

## BEST PRACTICES FOR IMPLEMENTING THESE GOALS WOULD INCLUDE:

1. To respond to the sense of urgency of the moment, we suggest considering the declaration of a national climate emergency, and nationalizing the tracks, under the railroad act, to allow for public investment in electrification and high speed freight and passenger service operations to be quickly brought to scale. This could allow for regional rail authorities, freight operations, and others to operate on an upgraded national, electrified rail network that crosses local jurisdictional boundaries.
2. Federal funding for station area planning and transit-land use coordination to reduce GHG emissions and support people-centered communities.

