

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-4804

November 18, 2015

Dear Conferees:

As you work together to craft a bipartisan compromise between the two highway bills that have passed the House and the Senate, I urge you to carefully consider the impacts the policy decisions you make today will have on West Virginia and the greater Appalachian Region for years to come. Please consider these priorities in crafting your final package.

Rural Broadband

It is no secret that the energy and environmental policies being promoting by this administration have hit coal country particularly hard. The Senate bill includes an innovative high-speed broadband deployment initiative that would allocate \$60 million to the Appalachian Regional Commission over the next six years to support regional projects and activities that will help make us more competitive in a global marketplace. The digital divide places rural Americans at a major disadvantage in an increasingly interconnected world, and we need targeted investments like the broadband deployment initiative to give our businesses and families a fighting chance.

Railroad Safety


As a member of the U.S. Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation, I fought hard for critical rail safety provisions that were included in the Senate-passed bill. In May of this year, nine years after the Federal Railroad Administration first recommended Electronically-Controlled Pneumatic (ECP) brakes, the agency finalized a rule to require them on all tank cars in an effort to prevent pile-ups like the one we saw in Fayette County, West Virginia earlier this year. I encourage you to include a rail safety title in this bill to give our first responders the tools they need to protect the communities they serve.

High Priority Corridors

While I am pleased that both bills recognize the importance of our nation's high priority corridors, such as the King Coal Highway and the Coalfields Expressway in West Virginia, recognition alone will not get these roads built. It costs money to build and maintain our nation's interstate highway system, and I believe it is imperative that the projects and promises included in this bill are fully funded. We should not write a check that we cannot cash.

Thank you for this opportunity to highlight my top priorities in this bill. I appreciate your commitment to reconciling these two bills and producing a bipartisan package that will put people to work building and maintaining our nation's infrastructure.

With warm regards,



Joe Manchin III
United States Senator