

We have another extension, another opportunity to do it right for America. We need to send signals to the vast team that builds, maintains, and repairs our infrastructure, to say nothing of the American people who own it and who use it and who depend upon it every day.

The bill in question goes far beyond bridges, bikes, and buses. It includes historic preservation, key environmental and economic revitalization for cities large and small, for suburbs and rural areas.

I hope that our conference committee will reject the White House insistence on somehow using this bill to atone for their budget problems and the sea of red ink that we are faced with with the deficit.

The \$318 billion that was the bill funding level from the other body is a start to keep faith with the American public's needs and aspirations. I would hope that our conference committee, in the course of this next month, will hold strong, to set the level for what America needs, the bill that was so effectively championed by our committee chairman and ranking member. The \$375 billion, after all, was not plucked out of the air. This was the figure that the administration's own Department of Transportation set as the needed level.

There is, I suppose, an opportunity for some sort of mechanism of a reopener. It may well be that we reach a point where these demands between the White House and what America needs and what various constituencies within this House require, that maybe we just decide that we kick the can down the road until after the election. But this is one area that we cannot afford to fail.

We are not just talking about the next 6 years of reauthorization. We are talking about a funding level, if we are not careful, that will establish a floor for the next generation where we will be playing catch-up.

I appreciate the leadership of the chairman, of the ranking member, and the conference committee. I wish them well, and I hope that when we come back next that we will have the bill that America deserves.