

From the Austin Business Journal:

<https://www.bizjournals.com/austin/news/2020/07/22/invest-in-america-act-sorely-needed.html>

Viewpoint: Moving Forward Act sorely needed

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Waterloo Park, a new downtown park under development by Waterloo Greenway, will have an amphitheater and great lawn with room for 5,000 people.

For decades, American leadership has failed to invest in our nation's crumbling infrastructure. Now, with a prolonged health crisis battering our economy, the consequences of inaction are dire.

We are thankful to House leadership for recently passing an infrastructure package called the Moving Forward Act. We would like to encourage Congress to reauthorize the Surface Transportation bill – FAST Act – which presents an opportunity to replace outdated infrastructure with smarter and safer infrastructure. We are hopeful this bill will pass to create jobs, boost the economy, address climate change and help build a more connected and inclusive country.

Waterloo Greenway is the perfect example of how these funds would benefit the community at large. As Austin begins the economic rehabilitation process stemming from Covid-19, it's projects like Waterloo Park and the Red River Cultural District that will help the city get back on its feet, economically and spiritually. Eastern downtown Austin has been underutilized for far too long, and the revitalization of this precious area has been long-awaited and well-deserved.

Over 150 urban parks across the country have been reclaiming underutilized infrastructure for over a decade by turning abandoned railways and highways, polluted waterways and underutilized space into new hybrid forms of public space. These projects are reconnecting neighborhoods by offering multi-modal options for residents, including transit, roads, multi-use trails and green space.

Leading the way on this effort is the Alliance for Infrastructure Reuse and Redevelopment (AIRR), a coalition including Waterloo Greenway, New York High Line, Atlanta BeltLine, Houston Buffalo Bayou and Bayou Greenways, Detroit Riverfront, Washington D.C. 11th Street Bridge Park, Miami Underline and Philadelphia Rail Park. Through public-private partnerships, these projects are generating over \$40 billion in economic development to communities through job creation, tax revenue and tourism, while improving access to cleaner, healthier environments and mitigating pollution.

In partnership with the city of Austin, Waterloo Greenway is re-activating Waller Creek, creating a mobility corridor and new series of parks for the city to enjoy. Through this placemaking effort, Waterloo Greenway is restoring the collective expression of Austin's diverse and creative spirit through nature, history, community, culture and art.

This project is not only critical for economic recovery and resilience, but also for the greater community as a symbol of inclusivity and our ongoing commitment to building a safer, just and more equitable Austin. Waterloo Greenway presents a community investment opportunity that learns from the pain of systemic inequities, fights to reverse racism and advocates for strategies to mitigate displacement. We can leverage this investment to elevate marginalized voices and reconnect with neighbors that have historically felt ignored by the separation of I-35. This is a place that will break those barriers, welcome all Austinites with open arms and serve as a bridge in a previously divided Austin — between east and west — past and progress.

Waterloo Greenway is much more than a park. It's a legacy project that will endure for our children and our children's children, but it will require our nation's leadership granting the necessary resources to enable true transformation.

The FAST Act is an opportunity for Congress to support infrastructure reuse projects that have helped revitalize so many communities. It's critical that these projects are included under the eligibility for federal grant opportunities and programs. We cannot miss this opportunity.

Authored by Waterloo Greenway Conservancy CEO Peter Mullan, Austin Mayor Steve Adler and Council Members Natasha Harper-Madison and Kathie Tovo.