Mr. DeFAZIO. I thank the chairman.

The gentleman from Virginia can try and change the subject about some future possible increase in gas tax or user fees. That is not what is before us today.

Plain and simple, what is before us today is on October 1st, a very short time from now, will the States see a loss of $4.5 billion in funding for highway, bridge and transit projects across this country? Our economy is teetering, and they want to play politics with a simple extensionof existing policy under the existing gas tax, which has been the same since 1993. That is not too much to ask. But they want to play politics with that. They want to jeopardize it. They want to delay it.

Now, let's just go to the delay. If they are totally successful, $4.5 billion in spending goes away October 1. Hundreds of thousands of jobs are lost. Transportation projects across the country come to a halt; transit systems grind to a halt, because the Federal funds aren't there, even though we can finance all those things, without borrowing a penny, out of the existing gas tax. That would go away too.

Maybe that is the world they want to live in. I don't. Bridges falling down, transit systems that are unsafe to ride on, road surfaces that are unacceptable, growing congestion. That is not a vision for the future. But that apparently is their vision--the status quo or worse, because now they are talking about an 18-month extension.

If we do an 18-month v, that will be 24 months or 30 months of the status quo, which is failing us. We aren't rebuilding the system; 160,000 bridges are weight limited, are functionally obsolete. People are sitting in congestion. Transit systems have $60 billion backlogs in outdated equipment. But that is okay with the Republicans, apparently. They want the status quo, because they are so afraid of talking about any sort of remedy of any type and any sort of investment.

Then, if they aren't successful in killing the whole program, if they just delay this temporary extension, on October 1 the States will lose $1 billion under the continuing resolution, $1 billion,

all across America. There is 20 percent unemployment in the construction trades, and they are going to increase that number because they want to walk away from the $1 billion that would be there with the simple extension of this program for 3 months.

They can have the fight and the debate later when they want to play politics about the levels of investment in the bill and how we might get there. But that is 3 months from now or longer, depending upon what we can work out with the Senate.

But the point is, you are playing politics here. You want to have a vote on a gas tax that isn't before this body, that is not likely to be before this body at any time in the near future, at least for 3 months if this bill is passed.

Don't play politics with investment in our infrastructure. Don't play politics with the economy. Don't play politics with people's jobs. Don't bring America to a screeching halt on October 1 and walk away from your obligation to extend this program.