

**STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN ROB PORTMAN**  
**PERMITTING ROUNDTABLE**  
***FAST-41 and the Federal Permitting Improvement Steering Council:***  
***Progress to Date and Next Steps***  
**JUNE 27, 2018**

We are here today to talk about a topic critical for our nation's future and for jobs and our economy. It's a topic that does not get a lot of day-to-day attention in the press, but it affects all of our daily lives including roads, bridges, electricity, and environmental restoration. I'm talking about the process infrastructure project sponsors have to follow to get federal permits approved for their projects.

The federal infrastructure permitting process is incredibly long. It's complicated, arcane, and bureaucratic. And the delays in the process have real costs: in time, money, jobs, and safety.

Two and a half years ago, Sen. McCaskill and I set out to try to improve that process with the Federal Permitting Improvement Act of 2015. That bill was enacted as Title 41 of the Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act, or the FAST Act, so it is now known as FAST-41.

FAST-41 helps streamline the permitting process for some of the largest infrastructure projects—which in the law are called “covered projects.”

FAST-41 created the Federal Permitting Improvement Steering Council. The Council, headed by an Executive Director and comprised of representatives from 17 government agencies, brings all the permitting agencies together at the start of covered projects to coordinate and streamline the permitting process.

The law encourages agencies to do their reviews concurrently, rather than sequentially, and to build off of each other's work. It requires one agency to be the lead agency on each project to ensure the others get their work done. And it requires the agencies to post a timeline on a

public, online dashboard and to regularly update that timeline so project sponsors and the public can keep track of where they are in the permitting process.

We'll hear some good news today from the Permitting Council and some project sponsors about how FAST-41 is working, and how it has begun to save time and reduce the cost of covered projects. But we know there is more work to be done.

The President still needs to appoint a permanent Executive Director. I'm disappointed that has not happened yet and expressed that view to the administration.

Finally, Senator McCaskill and I have introduced a new bill, S. 3017, the Federal Permitting Reform and Jobs Act, to improve FAST-41. Most critically, that bill would remove the seven-year sunset on FAST-41.

It also would allow more projects to apply to be covered, and it would set a two-year goal for each project's permitting process. If agencies realize they will need longer to permit a project, they can explain why and what they will do to mitigate delays.

And the bill will allow the Permitting Council to consult on non-covered projects to share its expertise and help resolve conflicts.

These are modest, smart reforms that build on the successes we're already seeing. I'm looking forward to hearing from each of our roundtable participants today about FAST-41's successes and where we can work to improve the permitting process going forward.