

ALN Position Paper on Drinking Water & Wastewater Infrastructure Act of 2021

Presented by the ALN Water & Wastewater Asset Leadership Board

The U.S. Senate made a bi-partisan and correct effort when it voted 89-2 to pass the [Drinking Water & Wastewater Infrastructure Act of 2021](#). The Act provides \$35 billion from 2022 to 2026 for states, Native American Tribes and other small, disadvantaged communities.

The Asset Leadership Network applauds the Act, the focus on underserved communities and the overwhelmingly bi-partisan support provided. In many ways, this is a refreshing relief from the political gridlock that is impeding U.S. citizens access to safe drinking water and wastewater systems.

Unfortunately, it misses the opportunity to address full scope of need and the long-term requirement for maintaining the water and wastewater infrastructure that is failing at a massive scale around the country.

The American Society of Civil Engineer's 2021 Report Card for America's Infrastructure [section on Water](#) states, "Despite the growing need for drinking water infrastructure, the federal government's share of capital spending in the water sector fell from 63% in 1977 to 9% of total capital spending in 2017." While the \$35 billion provided in this Act helps address this significant issue, it is insufficient. The Report indicates there will be a \$434 billion need for improved water systems by 2029 if proper actions are not taken.

The American Society of Civil Engineer's 2021 Report Card for America's Infrastructure [section on Wastewater](#) indicates there is an annual \$81 billion shortfall for properly maintaining systems.

The Drinking Water & Wastewater Infrastructure Act of 2021 also fails to require organizations to follow standard asset management principles as a condition for receiving funds. In contrast, the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act ([MAP-21](#)) funded transit authorities, but only if they established Asset Management Plans that indicated how they were going to use the funds. MAP-21 provided education and training funds to assist transit authorities in understanding asset management principles and practices needed to establish Asset Management Plans. This good governance not only assisted with the use of funds, but helped the transit authorities understand how to apply best practices across their entire asset portfolio.

The ALN suggests that:

- 1) the U.S. House of Representatives include language in the Act to require Strategic Asset Management Plans in concert with other asset management best practices in order to receive funding; and,
- 2) fully fund the upcoming Biden Administration American Jobs Plan infrastructure legislation.

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