**Headline:** How the National Infrastructure Program Creates Jobs for Today and Tomorrow

By David McCall

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**[Article Body:]**

Ryan Andreas helped his union push through legislation for a national infrastructure program in 2021, realizing that historic upgrades to America’s utilities, ports, and bridges portended brighter futures for him and his co-workers at Travis Pattern and Foundry.

It turned out exactly as Andreas anticipated. He and his colleagues experienced skyrocketing demand for clamps, vacuum tubing, and other products after President Joe Biden signed the [Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA)](https://www.npr.org/2021/11/15/1055841358/biden-signs-1t-bipartisan-infrastructure-bill-into-law) on November 15, 2021, prompting the company to create hundreds more union jobs and expand production facilities.

“It’s benefited us tremendously,” said Andreas, financial secretary for United Steelworkers (USW) Local 289M, which represents nearly 500 workers at two Travis facilities and another manufacturer in Spokane, Washington. “We’ve almost had to turn away business.”

The IIJA unleashed $1.2 trillion for tens of thousands of projects nationwide. It’s upgrading transportation, communications, and energy systems while building back manufacturing capacity, [generating hundreds of thousands of good-paying jobs](https://www.dol.gov/agencies/whd/government-contracts/protections-for-workers-in-construction#:~:text=The%20Bipartisan%20Infrastructure%20Law%20will,reliable%2C%20and%20environmentally%20sound%20future.), and investing in the middle class.

In Washington state alone, as U.S. Representative Rick Larsen noted, the program continues to touch all parts of the economy, [creating jobs](https://larsen.house.gov/news/documentsingle.aspx?DocumentID=2804) in construction as well as the “transit, trucking, aviation, rail and maritime sectors.” Andreas and his colleagues just wrapped up work on a big order supplying parts to a company serving the rail industry.

Across the country, [investment in plants, mills, and other manufacturing facilities doubled since the end of 2021](https://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/briefing-room/2023/08/14/biden-harris-administration-releases-final-guidance-to-bolster-american-made-goods-in-federal-infrastructure-projects/#:~:text=The%20law%2C%20which%20includes%20the,construction%20materials%2C%20and%20manufactured%20products.) after increasing only negligibly in the four years before that, according to data from the [U.S. Treasury Department](https://home.treasury.gov/news/featured-stories/unpacking-the-boom-in-us-construction-of-manufacturing-facilities) and the White House. “The factory construction of today means manufacturing jobs for tomorrow,” Livia Shmavonian, director of Biden’s Made in America office, observed in August.

Travis Pattern and Foundry is among the companies committing to facilities and people because of the IIJA. The 101-year-old family-owned business recently completed a new building, [adding 45,000 square feet of production space](https://www.garco.com/project-update-travis-pattern-foundry-building-3-project-update/), and it’s now planning [another](https://www.spokesman.com/stories/2023/aug/10/the-dirt-travis-pattern-and-foundry-looking-to-exp/) multimillion-dollar addition to its 170,000-square-foot campus.

“We are always looking to hire more people,” said Andreas, noting the contract he and his fellow union members recently ratified delivers significant wage increases, cuts the time needed to reach the top of the pay scale, and provides other enhancements that will help current and future workers build better lives.

“They are able to buy houses. They are able to support their families,” he said of workers, adding that their increased earning power also enables them to better sustain their community.

None of this occurred by accident.

The USW and other unions [worked with Biden](https://m.usw.org/news/media-center/releases/2023/usw-build-america-buy-america-critical-to-creating-good-jobs), the most pro-worker president in history, to ensure the use of union labor as well as American-made materials, parts, and components in IIJA-funded projects.

Just as it has at other manufacturers, the Build America, Buy America requirements increased demand for the dozens of products made by Andreas and his colleagues. Some of those components go directly into utility substations or other infrastructure, while others go into vehicles or equipment used by companies in other industries benefiting from the infrastructure program.

“I firmly believe we should keep our investments in the United States and not offshore our jobs to other countries,” said Andreas, pointing out that the IIJA has not only brought in new customers but heightened his own company’s use of domestic suppliers.

The Build America, Buy America requirements—along with the IIJA’s [$55 billion investment](https://www.epw.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/2023/9/carper-highlights-historic-drinking-water-investments-additional-water-infrastructure-needs#:~:text=ON%20THE%20BIL'S%20HISTORIC%20WATER%20INFRASTRUCTURE%20PROVISIONS%3A&text=Through%20that%20law%2C%20Congress%20is,it%20was%20fully%20paid%20for.) in drinking and wastewater systems—fuel Aaron Sutter’s optimism for the Cerro Flow Products plant in Sauget, Illinois.

“With our plant, it’s always uncertain,” said Sutter, vice president of USW Local 4294. “It’s an old plant, with a lot of old equipment.”

Foreign competition compounded the anxiety. For more than a decade, Cerro Flow joined other stakeholders in raising an alarm about imports of seamless refined copper pipe and tube that various countries unfairly dumped in U.S. markets.

Now, however, Sutter sees a brighter future for the plant, where workers make plumbing and refrigeration components.

Cerro Flow created new jobs in Sauget. It’s providing overtime. It’s also offering training and raises to some workers to help with recruitment and retention.

Sutter hopes significant capital investments will be right around the corner, better positioning the plant to capitalize on the domestic procurement requirements in the infrastructure program.

The IIJA empowers workers to build stronger, more resilient communities, protecting families not only from lead-tainted water but also from decrepit bridges, failing dams, and [leaky natural gas](https://www.transportation.gov/briefing-room/biden-harris-administration-announces-historic-funding-37-projects-improve-safety-fix#:~:text=The%20Natural%20Gas%20Distribution%20Infrastructure,natural%20gas%20distribution%20pipes%2C%20helping) lines.

“This is definitely something we need,” said Russell D. Sabol, unit president for USW Local 14693, whose members work at Alex E. Paris Contracting in Atlasburg, Pennsylvania. “There’s a lot of work to be done.”

The company has hired dozens of workers to install and repair gas lines under IIJA-funded projects across Pennsylvania, Sabol said, noting union paving crews go in to handle resurfacing duties after pipeline installation.

Local 14693 members performed natural gas line work before the IIJA. But the law “helped to magnify it for us and brought different customers,” said Sabol, noting gas suppliers often struggled to pay for projects and put them on the back burner until federal assistance became available.

Workers like Andreas, Sutter, and Sabol enjoy the boosts in hiring and production they’re experiencing right now. But they’re also focused on leveraging the IIJA to permanently grow the middle class, ensuring the nation’s prosperity and security long term.

“It’s a great investment in our workers and our communities,” Sutter said.

“There’s more to come,” he added, noting many infrastructure projects remain in the planning stages. “We haven’t seen the full economic benefit from this yet.”