

## OPENING STATEMENT

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Subcommittee on Research and Technology  
House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology

Research and Technology Subcommittee Hearing  
*The Future of Surface Transportation*

June 18, 2014

Thank you, Chairman Bucshon, for calling this hearing. I also want to thank our witnesses for appearing before the Subcommittee and for their assistance today in helping us identify the research, development, and technology needs to ensure safer and more efficient transportation in our daily lives.

We all have multiple places we need to get ourselves and our families to and from in a day and we all wish we could do it quicker and cheaper. The average household spends 17 percent of its budget on transportation. In all, transportation-related goods and services contribute about \$1.2 trillion to the U.S. economy.

As a Member of the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure – along with Chairman Bucshon – I have been able to work on several bills to authorize funds and set policies for road, rail, mass transit, aviation, and other critical transportation projects across the country. I cannot overemphasize the need for long-term investments in transportation to keep people and commerce moving. As we focus today in this hearing on the future of surface transportation, I look forward to learning more from our witnesses about what this committee should be thinking about including in the research title of the upcoming surface transportation reauthorization. If we are committed to making our transportation system more reliable and more efficient, while at the same time ensuring that transportation planners are wisely investing taxpayer dollars, we need to have a robust and effective transportation R&D program.

This Subcommittee last examined transportation R&D in 2011. Since then, Congress has passed MAP-21, the two-year surface transportation reauthorization law that expires this year. In the past we have examined a number of research and development challenges faced by the Department of Transportation. Some of these challenges have included improving planning and coordination at DOT, strengthening technology transfer, and environmental mitigation. These remain important topics for discussion today.

Safety is a top priority across all of DOT's research programs. I look forward to an update on the progress DOT and the private sector have made in developing vehicle-to-vehicle communications and other technology for safety and what barriers these face for full-scale deployment. Many of these technologies are precursors to the technologies we will need when we eventually deploy self-driving cars. I visited the Google campus in Mountain View, California last December and saw the rapid progress that they are making towards autonomous vehicles. V2V and V2I technologies have the capacity to greatly increase safety and efficiency in transportation and I believe autonomous vehicles are the logical way to maximize these gains. At the pace technology is currently progressing, I often ask people, "Do you think that a child born today will ever learn to drive a car?" At this point, I think it's an open question.

But we shouldn't focus solely on roads and highways. Rail transportation is hugely important for my district as well as the nation. Nearly a quarter of all freight rail traffic in the US passes through Chicago, and it is a major hub for passenger rail as well. Moving forward, we must invest more in R&D to ensure the safety of our rail passengers and operators. Preventing another tragedy like the Metro North train

derailment in New York and the Washington Metro train collision must be a priority. I look forward to hearing from Dr. Barkan about the latest in rail and rail safety research being conducted at the University of Illinois.

Through the University Transportation Center program, universities such as the University of Illinois play key roles in transportation R&D. Most DOT funded research is applied research and development to address short-term needs and opportunities. Only a small fraction of the transportation research budget is dedicated to longer term research, but it is the longer-term research that will yield the big breakthroughs for a safer, faster, and less expensive transportation future. We need to ensure that universities are given the flexibility to pursue long-term research and that DOT continues to invest in mid to long-term research through other programs, such as the Exploratory Advanced Research program.

The Committee on Science, Space, and Technology should play an important role in defining our transportation research priorities for the future. I'm confident that today's witnesses will give us some solid ideas for moving transportation research forward and I want this Committee to be actively involved in writing the research title in the next surface transportation reauthorization bill. Again, I want to thank Chairman Bucshon for calling this hearing, and the witnesses as well for being here. I look forward to your testimony and a productive discussion.

And with that I yield back.