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Surface Transportation Reauthorization Legislation

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Good morning Chairman Barrasso, Ranking Member Carper and Members of the Committee. Thank you for inviting me here today to give you my perspective on the importance of reauthorizing the surface transportation legislation. As a previous Cabinet Secretary for the Delaware Department of Transportation and now as a Senior Policy Fellow at the University of Delaware, I hope my testimony today will be a helpful addition to your deliberations on this critical legislative issue.

I believe the Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act (Fast Act) provided many positive policy and funding changes that have served us well in delivering needed infrastructure improvements such as a greater focus on pedestrian and bicycling facilities, funding freight related highway improvements, streamlining the environmental review process and increasing funding for public transportation. It is the momentum from this legislation that we need to build upon to solve the many transportation challenges remaining.

These challenges are well documented by the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) Infrastructure Report Card. Unfortunately, we have become all too familiar with our infrastructure receiving a D+ based upon ASCE's evaluation of capacity, condition, and funding. The D+ grade means our country's infrastructure remains in poor condition, mostly below standard, at high risk of failure and inadequately funded. This illustrates the significant backlog of projects needed to address operational problems as

well as capacity improvements to meet current and future demands. This backlog of projects also contributes to the significant number of highway, pedestrian and bicycle fatalities and serious injuries we experience each year. Operational, safety, maintenance and capacity deficiencies all contribute to this national growing trend. As engineers, scientists, planners, and environmentalists we know how to solve many of our most challenging transportation problems, but we need the federal funding to support those efforts.

Sustainability and Resilience for Transportation

It is the challenge of all DOT's to prioritize limited resources to address the various needs of each state's transportation system. Maintaining and rehabilitating the existing infrastructure, optimizing the efficiency of the system and addressing safety issues remains a primary focus. However, climate change has added a new external impact to the transportation system that requires new strategies and technologies to improve our resiliency to these changes. A long-term, comprehensive approach is needed to anticipate future impacts to transportation infrastructure and create funding plans that will help mitigate these impacts. It is also an opportunity to implement policies and focus capital investments on reducing greenhouse gas emissions that contribute to climate change. As an example, DeIDOT has embraced these challenges by developing a Strategic Implementation Plan for Climate Change, Sustainability and Resilience. This plan recognizes the need for greater resiliency due to the vulnerability of the state's infrastructure to withstand and recover from weather related incidents. This vulnerability will impact the State's ability to provide critical transportation services in a timely manner.

The future of Delaware's transportation program must also include strategies to make the system more sustainable, ensuring investments are made that support a balance between economic, social and environmental concerns. For example, researching new pavement materials that will better withstand flooding, extend pavement life and expedite maintenance practices are part of this strategic plan.

Pursuing ways to improve stormwater management techniques that protect the community and the natural environment are cited as other examples to improve the sustainability of the transportation system.

In addition to prioritizing alternative modes of travel, their strategy to reduce greenhouse gas emissions will also include alternative energy technologies and low -emission vehicle deployment. This integrated program to address the challenges of climate change are critical to states like Delaware but require additional sources and predictable levels of funding to implement successfully.

Economic Impacts

Transportation is at the heart of a strong economy. Having a reliable multi-modal transportation network is the foundation of economic prosperity and a quality of life we have come to expect. Our welfare and public health are dependent upon accessible transportation options and the timely delivery of emergency services. The quality of this network will also influence a state's ability to retain and attract companies as well as the workforce needed to support these jobs.

Businesses need to rely on the commitments made by government to deliver the needed infrastructure that will not only support the needs of the broader public but will help determine a company's level of investment into a community. Federal, state and local governments need to work collaboratively on all regulatory processes to be efficient, time sensitive and deliver high quality improvements that support the environment while addressing safety and capacity issues. Adopting a partnership mentality between the public and private sectors is also important to funding and delivering improvements.

This approach has been the basis for Delaware's successful redevelopment of the Wilmington Riverfront. The transportation improvements became the key to attracting new businesses. What once was a highly contaminated industrial area has turned into a thriving employment and entertainment destination with new high-density residential areas that are supported by the Joseph R. Biden Railroad

Station on Amtrak's northeast corridor. Investments in wetland preservation became an opportunity for educational experiences and appreciation of our valuable wildlife habitat. Bicycle and pedestrian facilities were integrated into the master plan and are key elements of why this area has become an attractive place to live, work and play.

A critical component of this redevelopment initiative was the federal funding that enabled DelDOT to build new interstate connections to support access into the area. These were large financial investments but necessary to provide sufficient roadway capacity. Committing to these improvements and the other infrastructure elements not only brought jobs to the riverfront but has created the momentum for other redevelopment projects in downtown Wilmington.

Technology and the Future of Transportation

Another benefit of the FAST Act is the availability of grants that encourage implementation of advanced transportation technologies. These grants through FHWA's Highway Research and Development program enabled DelDOT and other states to analyze the benefits of using technology to improve safety and operational performance of the highway system. For example, DelDOT will be expanding its current use of connected traffic signals to enable their traffic management system to better anticipate and respond to unexpected areas of congestion and slowdowns. Their goal is to have real-time data that will improve the management of the system automatically thereby maximizing the operational efficiency of the highway network. Performance improvements of the existing system are critical given the challenges of building new capacity.

Supporting multi-state initiatives such as the I95 Corridor Coalition's Mileage Based User Fee (MBUF) project is a great example of how federal highway funding can help lead us into the future to find a more reliable user fee than the current gas tax. It is unlikely that the gas tax will ever provide adequate funding for the level of transportation investments our country needs given the advancement of electric

vehicle technology, more fuel-efficient gas-powered vehicles and the public's resistance to increasing the gas tax. Exploring the logistical, technical and public policy issues associated with implementing a multi-state MBUF is a forward-thinking initiative. It may also be the answer to funding our growing infrastructure needs more equitably among the users of the highway system.

Conclusion

Our transportation investments support the welfare and safety of the traveling public, provide healthy lifestyle transportation choices of walking and biking, reduce our greenhouse gas emissions through more public transit services and are key to our economic prosperity. The timely reauthorization of the surface transportation legislation is critical to addressing our current infrastructure gaps and our future investment needs.

Thank you for your time and I look forward to your questions.