Opening Remarks of Ranking Member Whitehouse: *"The Federal Highway Administration's Proposed Fiscal Year 2027 Budget."*

Thank you, Chair Capito, for calling this hearing. Administrator McMaster, thank you for being here today.

The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act provided a bipartisan blueprint for federal investment in our nation's infrastructure. Shovels continue to break ground on projects across the country, many of which had waited years to move forward. And billions of dollars from the IIJA remain available to bring more projects to fruition.

Administrator, even in this final year of the IIJA, I urge you to continue to implement the law. All of it. In all states.

The IIJA offered a complete approach to infrastructure investment. It funded roads and bridges, bike paths and sidewalks, and yes, electric vehicle charging infrastructure. And it funded transit and rail too. In short, it was designed to offer Americans more mobility choices, between internal combustion engine and electric vehicles, between driving and mass transit, or even walking or biking.

As we are learning – painfully – over the last few months, having transportation choices matters.

Today, President Trump's war in Iran has raised gasoline costs by nearly $1.50 since the start of the war, pushing them near or above $4 per gallon in every single state. Since the start of the war, Americans have spent an extra $45 billion on gasoline and diesel. Guess who benefits from that – the President's big fossil fuel donors. By the end of the year, Big Oil could have an excess profits windfall of nearly a quarter-trillion dollars.

With driving a gasoline-fueled car so expensive, many people are looking for alternatives, and cost is not the only reason. If you live in an urban area, you may be sick of being stuck in traffic. Maybe you're looking to improve your health and want to bike or walk to work or school. Make America Healthy Again, remember that?

Unfortunately, the Big Oil transportation policies this administration has pursued have limited these alternatives, over and over again.

On EVs, which are already cheaper to own and far cheaper to fuel than gasoline-fueled vehicles, and don't belch toxic exhaust, the Trump administration froze the Charging and Fueling Infrastructure Grant Program, holding up funds for more than 130 grants, including in my home state of Rhode Island. This froze more than a billion dollars.

On mass transit, the Trump administration proposed cutting the budget for transit projects by nearly a quarter.

On rail, the Trump administration has attacked major projects in New York, New Jersey, and California.

And on bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure, the Trump administration has canceled, or tied up in red tape, dozens of grants.

The Trump administration's Big Oil transportation philosophy is that there's only one right way to get from point A to point B: in a gasoline-fueled car. Cost, traffic congestion, air pollution, safety, and consumer choice be damned; Trump's big fossil fuel donors must be rewarded.

The Trump administration policies serve its Big Oil donors, not the Americans who need affordable, reliable, and safe transportation choices.

Putting Trump donors first is bad enough. Add wholesale violation of Congress's role to authorize and appropriate grant programs, and targeting of blue state projects for the sin of being blue. We should not put up with this.

Two weeks ago, the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee advanced a surface transportation bill. I don't love their bill, but I acknowledge their hard work to move the process forward.

If we want a bill to get done in this Congress, we need two basic things.

First—and Administrator, this is where we need your help—we need implementation of the law. All of it. All of the grant programs, including the ones Trump's Big Oil donors don't like. Including the ones in blue states Trump doesn't like.

Second, we need all the relevant Senate committees to get on board. This committee is doing what it can, but agreed top lines from leadership on both sides, and engagement by the other committees, is necessary. To get our support, it needs to be done in a comprehensive way that invests in choice and resilience, supports all of our communities, and takes our climate dangers and energy costs seriously.

Administrator, I welcome you to work with us on these important next steps.