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Committee on Environment
and Public Works

Washington, D.C.

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THE FEDERAL HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION'S PROPOSED FISCAL YEAR 2027 BUDGET

Wednesday, June 3, 2026

United States Senate

Committee on Environment and Public Works

Washington, D.C.

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:02 a.m. in room 406, Dirksen Senate Office Building, the Honorable Shelley Moore Capito [chairman of the committee] presiding.

Present: Senators Capito, Whitehouse, Cramer, Curtis, Sullivan, Ricketts, Wicker, Boozman, Husted, Merkley, Kelly, Padilla, Blunt Rochester, Alsobrooks.

STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE SHELLEY MOORE CAPITO, A UNITED STATES SENATOR FROM THE STATE OF WEST VIRGINIA

Senator Capito. Good morning, Administrator McMaster. Thank you for being here with us today.

I want to thank everybody else for being here. I apologize for being a little bit late. I was over at Commerce introducing Gordon Gee for the NIL hearing, and I wanted to make sure I did that.

Senator Whitehouse. Formerly of Brown University.

Senator Capito. Formerly of Brown University, formerly of Ohio State, formerly of Vanderbilt, too. He has made the rounds.

Here is a historic fact. He has signed more college degrees than any other university president in the history of the Country. I thought that was pretty cool.

I want to thank you, Administrator, for everything that you do and that your agency has done to improve roads and bridges across the Country. Notably in West Virginia, I want to extend my appreciation for a few, the grants award for the Dunbar Toll Bridge, final environmental documents for the Wardensville segment of Corridor H of the Appalachian Development Highway System.

In addition, Corridor H will reach a critical milestone later this month when a segment from Kearns to Parsons opens to

traffic. This milestone would not have been possible without the assistance of the Trump Administration.

These projects will have a positive effect on the quality of life for West Virginians and also help drive further economic development.

Today, we look forward to hearing your testimony regarding the Federal Highway Administration, or FHWA's proposed budget for the coming year, and implementation for the final year of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act. The budget requests over $66 billion in total funding for FHWA. This amount includes approximately $65 billion for programs that are funded out of the Highway Trust Fund and approximately $1.5 billion for programs that are funded out of the general fund.

Because we are in the final year of the IIJA, and Congress' efforts to reauthorize Federal highway and bridge programs continues, the budget request does not include detailed account-level requests. The budget request also reflects an updated organizational chart for the agency that includes an increase in staffing of FHWA division offices in each State.

As a federally-funded, State administered program, the FHWA staff in these division offices are crucial for timely and informed approvals of projects and funding. After a reduction of FHWA's work force, there are States that are sharing division administrators and personnel serving in dual roles, and

vacancies up and down the directories for division offices.

I supported FHWA's concerted effort to staff these key roles. And I look forward to the administration's testimony on how they will achieve the staffing numbers reflected in the request, which are necessary to effectively administer these programs.

FHWA plays an important role in faithfully implementing the final months of the IIJA. While I am proud of the role I played in bringing about that law, we have since learned how challenging it has been to administer it at every level of government.

Last year, Secretary Duffy testified to this committee that the prior administration left a backlog of over 3,200 announced grant awards, but unsigned grant agreements. This backlog included important projects in all of our States, and certainly mine is no exception. The agreements must be signed so these grants can deliver meaningful improvements to our surface transportation network.

I appreciate the significant progress FHWA has made in advancing the grants within its purview. The State of West Virginia has had previously stuck grants for projects across the State, including in Bluefield, Coalfields, Charleston, Beckley, and others. But unfortunately, there is more work to be done.

I am troubled by estimates from FHWA that the coming August

redistribution amount will continue the trend of being historically high. August redistribution is a unique accounting process to ensure that the annual obligation limit of FHWA's programs does not lapse. Specifically, this process pulls back obligation limitations that can't be used by non-formula or allocated programs, and redistributes that to the States to use on the formula programs each August.

The practical result of a historic August redistribution is an end of the year scramble, where lower priority investments may be carried out to avoid a lapse, but not because of their transportation benefits. This year, FHWA is estimating the States must use $8.5 billion of obligation limitation in the last two months of this Fiscal Year.

I am concerned with the solution that FHWA's budget request proposes to address this issue. FHWA's proposal to extend the period of availability for the obligation limitation for allocated programs does not address the root cause of these historic amounts. Too many allocated programs with overlapping purposes and eligibilities is a big contributor to this issue.

On a related note, we saw a significant lapse in contract authority occur, specifically over $370 million lapsed and the biggest driver of that was to protect the discretionary grant program. I am concerned that another lapse in contract authority would occur this year.

I look forward to hearing from the Administrator on the actions that FHWA is doing to address these financial issues.

Finally, as my colleagues have heard me say many times, we need to understand what worked and what did not work under IIJA which will inform our legislative agenda going forward. We have conducted oversight, received expert testimony from Federal, State, and local partners, and collected feedback from our Senate colleagues. I am using what we have learned from these efforts as we develop the next Surface Transportation Reauthorization bill.

As I continue to be guided by my three overreaching principles, one, improvement of the safety and reliability of America's surface transportation network with impactful investments, two, reform and modernize Federal programs and policies to increase efficiencies, and three, address the variety of surface transportation needs all across these States.

To achieve these principles, I have focused on crafting a bill that targets investments in road and bridge projects through flexible, predictable formula funds to the State to deliver on-time and on-budget projects. I am working to cut administrative overhead, reduce duplicative programs and avoid a Federal overreach, so that we can avoid future grant backlogs, funding lapses, and project delays.

We have work ahead of us on this bipartisan agreement. I

am committing to work with our partner committees in the Senate, colleagues in the House, to deliver a bill to the President's desk, and certainly, working with my Ranking Member, Senator Whitehouse, as well.

I look forward to working with you, Administrator McMaster, on these priorities. I now recognize Ranking Member Whitehouse for his opening statement.

[The prepared statement of Senator Capito follows:]

STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE SHELDON WHITEHOUSE, A UNITED STATES SENATOR FROM THE STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

Senator Whitehouse. Thanks very much. With your leave, Madam Chair, I will say a word about permitting reform before I go to that.

Our status there, as the Chair and I continue to make good progress, I very much believe that she and her team are operating in good faith and making progress. And I hope that that feeling is mutual.

The problem that we are seeing is, frankly, not Republican versus Democrat in the Senate. It is legislative versus executive. I will even go so far to say that I think the White House participation, two words, capital White House, participation in our negotiations through the Chair's staff and in some direct conversations, while not aligned with what I want to do, is not out of the bounds of ordinary political disagreement and negotiation and compromise.

But once you get away from our negotiations, that is where things start to go to hell. We have had to pause negotiations a while ago. And we did so because of repeated illegal stop work orders on projects that had hundreds of millions of dollars invested in them and nowhere nearing completion. They were completely unjustified.

And because of the astonishingly adhesive quality of the

Secretary of Interior's desk from which no piece of paper ever seemed to depart, there was that roach motel, you know, they go in and never go out, his desk was the roach motel of clean energy permits.

We reached an understanding that the nonsense on illegal stop work orders would stop, and it did, on the five projects. And we reached an understanding that there would be some lessening of the adhesive grip of the Secretary of Interior's desk for solar and wind projects, and Senator Heinrich seemed initially satisfied with where that was going.

And the third understanding was that we would see continued progress. And we really aren't seeing much in the way of continued progress. The problem that we are facing right now is that even if the Interior Secretary's desk has become only a partial roach motel, the Department of Defense is full-on no projects pass muster.

There are 250 wind projects, more than 250 wind projects, awaiting what is often a standard approval at the Department of Defense. The general concern that has been indicated is that they have national security issues. Well, I happen to doubt that any member of this committee could tell me with a straight face that all 250 wind projects have national security problems that prevent them from going forward.

I think the idea is preposterous. And I don't think that

there is a good faith effort at the Department of Defense to sort out where there may be a national security issue and where there clearly is not. I think what happened is that the venue of obstruction of clean energy projects shifted from the Department of Interior to the Department of Defense. Same game, different court. And it is getting very frustrating.

Senator Heinrich and I are both continuing to negotiate, with Chair Lee and Chair Capito. We are continuing to move forward. But this has to stop.

Senator Wicker. Would the gentleman yield on that point?

Senator Whitehouse. Yes.

Senator Wicker. As my friend knows, I have the opportunity of being chair of the Armed Services Committee, and I join you in that statement. I would inform my friend that I am working to get some resolution.

Senator Whitehouse. That is extremely helpful, and I thank the distinguished chairman of the Armed Services Committee for whatever he can do to be helpful.

I would note that when we hit our obstacles with the EPW and Interior and Energy committee agencies, the Chair, Senator Capito, was very helpful in achieving that resolution, and had the support of your Whip, Senator Barrasso, and of your Majority Leader, Senator Thune.

So I think there is a very solid path forward for

continuing to get this progress, and I hope it comes.

There is a momentum even when my and Martin's good faith negotiations with Mike and Shelly produce a good faith bill. But my caucus won't support it because they have zero confidence in any degree of faithful execution of the agreement by this administration.

So I think it is in all of our interests to try to build a track record of some degree of fair executive administration in this area, not only to continue the successful and good faith negotiations that are going on, but not to poison the well of the votes that we are going to need to pass this bill down the road.

So I appreciate very much Chair Capito giving me the space to make that observation. I am very grateful for Chairman Wicker's comment.

And now I will turn to our witness here today. Administrator McMaster, thank you for being here. 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 waited years to move forward. With billions of dollars from the IIJA, we made it available to bring more projects to fruition.

Even in this final year, of the IIJA, I urge you to

continue to implement that 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 for Americans who choose that form of transport.

And it funded transit and rail, too. In short, it was designed to offer Americans more mobility with choices between internal combustion engine and electric, between driving and mass transit, even walking or biking.

As we are learning painfully over the last months, having transportation choices really matters. Today, President Trump's war in Iran has raised gasoline costs by nearly $1.50, pushing costs 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 are looking to improve your health and want to bike or walk to work. Make America Healthy Again, kinda.

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 $8 billion and harmed many Americans who have chosen electric transportation.

On mass transit, the Trump administration proposed cutting the budget for transit projects by nearly 25 percent. On rail, the Trump administration attacked major projects in New York, New Jersey, and California. 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 is only one right way to get from Point A to Point B, and that is in a gasoline-fueled car. Costs, traffic congestion, air pollution, safety and consumer choice be damned; Trump's big fossil fuel donors must be rewarded.

The Trump administration policies serve his 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' 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 do want to 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, Mr. Administrator, 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 under Chairman Capito is doing what it can. But agreed toplines from leadership on both sides and engagement by the other three committees is necessary. And to get our support, it all needs to be done in a comprehensive way that invests in choice and resilience, supports all of our communities, and takes climate dangers and energy costs seriously.

So with that, Administrator, we welcome you to work with us on these important steps, and we welcome you to the committee. Thank you, Chairman.

[The prepared statement of Senator Whitehouse follows:]

Senator Capito. Right. Thank you. Thank you, Senator Whitehouse.

This afternoon, we are joined by the Honorable Sean McMaster, Administrator of the Federal Highway Administration, or FHWA. I look forward to hearing from Administrator McMaster about the agency's proposed budget for Fiscal Year 2027, and the implementation of the current programs through the end of the Fiscal Year.

Administrator McMaster, thank you for being here with us. Before we move forward, I will administer the oath to receive your sworn testimony. If you would please rise.

Raise your right hand and answer the following questions. Do you swear the testimony you are about to give to this committee is the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, so help you, God?

Mr. McMaster. Yes.

Senator Capito. Great. Let the record show that the witness has answered in the affirmative, so we will now proceed. Administrator McMaster, you are recognized for your opening statement.

STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE SEAN McMASTER, ADMINISTRATOR, FEDERAL HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION, UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Mr. McMaster. Chair Capito, Ranking Member Whitehouse, members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today.

The Federal Highway Administration is carrying out President Trump and Secretary Duffy's vision, getting American building again. The Fiscal Year 2027 budget will enable us to carry out this vision. We are focused on large, durable projects that enhance safety, our top priority, while connecting our Country and our people. We are delivering on our goal to get back to basics by building big, beautiful infrastructure.

The Trump administration inherited over 3,200 projects backlogged at the DOT. As of May 15th, 53 percent of those backlogged projects have obligated funding and are finally underway.

For the Federal Highway Administration administered grants, we are moving forward with over 1,500 competitive grant awards from the backlog left by the prior administration. In just the time since President Trump took office, we have obligated nearly $8.4 billion for competitive grants at the Federal Highway Administration.

We also announced over 600 grant selections totaling over

$2.4 billion. The Federal Highway Administration is also working diligently to issue notices of funding opportunities, making more funds available for critical investments in transportation infrastructure.

None of these achievements would be possible without the hard work of the entire staff of the FHWA, both at headquarter and our division offices. Based on the latest national household travel survey, 91 percent of travel in the United States happens on our roads and bridges. That is exactly why we must get back to basics and fund this infrastructure.

Our results speak for themselves. Comparing the first year of the Trump administration to the last year of the Biden administration, FHWA authorized more unique projects, including more construction projects, by 60 percent, and obligated and expended more funds in support of critical infrastructure projects.

We are accelerating project delivery and slashing unnecessary regulatory burdens. Last June, Secretary Duffy revised the Department's NEPA procedures and expanded the NEPA assignment program to empower States to remove unnecessary delays and costs. Last year, the Secretary announced a NEPA assignment agreement with Texas, and most recently Maine and Nebraska joined the program. I was just in Ohio last month to renew our agreement with them for an additional 10 years.

Additionally, we asked each State to identify their top three priorities. We have already cleared over 35 of them and will continue to work closely with States to deliver the rest. Safety remains our top priority at the Department.

Last July, Secretary Duffy launched FHWA's Safe Roads Initiative, a back to basics strategy targeting non-freeway arterials where over half of U.S. roadway deaths occur. In a unified national response, all States identified nearly 4,300 freeway arterial segments and intersections for safety and operational improvements.

The safety of the traveling public, as well as the men and women who maintain our roads and highways, is incredibly important to me. In 2024, 850 people were killed in work zone crashes in America. This is unacceptable.

I was proud to announce in April that we are investing half a million dollars in a brand-new training program to manage and design advanced work zones. We are offering this training free for the first in-person training to every State, plus our technical assistance program partners.

FHWA is also working closely with our State and local partners to enhance crash responder safety for our traffic incident management training in support of the Trump administration's commitment to training one million responders. The Federal Highway Administration hosted its first ever

national day of traffic incident management responder training at the DOD headquarters this year.

Traffic congestion hurts our Nation, choking our economy and stealing priceless time from American families. In April, the Secretary launched the Freedom to Drive initiative, urging governors to partner with the Department to tackle this crisis, utilizing every Federal tool to reduce gridlock. I look forward to reviewing States' responses later this month.

This year, as we celebrate America's 250th birthday, the interstates' 70th anniversary and the Route 66 centennial, we reflect on how far America's transportation system has come. I look forward to working to build on our historic legacy and usher the new golden age of transportation.

Thank you again for the opportunity to appear before you today. I would be happy to answer your questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. McMaster follows:]

Senator Capito. Thank you very much.

And thank you for your emphasis on work zone safety improvements. We have had some of those who have lost their lives -- it is a stunning number, really, over 800 deaths. Some of them occurred in my home State, and they were very, very tragic.

In 2022, we had the West Virginia DOT Secretary before us talking about IIJA. And he predicted that funding for the core formula programs would be obligated, but that the funding for discretionary grant programs would face challenges.

In fact, the NEVI program, which is the charging stations for electric vehicles, has significant unobligated balances and few investments to show for it. West Virginia in and of itself has had to pay several consultants just to figure this out, and I don't think we have one EV station yet that has been built after all these years.

The ballooning balances in these discretionary programs has exacerbated the August redistribution, which I addressed in my opening statement, and scrambled how States can program their funding for next year. So these are such a problem that this committee has had to re-intervene two years ago for the bipartisan legislative fix to sweep up unused credit assistance, and then last year's transportation appropriations bill rescinded and repurposed billions of dollars to try to avoid

this issue.

So we have to get that financial house in order.

What are the obligation rates of formula funding compared to the discretionary programs?

Mr. McMaster. Thank you, Senator. Thanks, Chairman. You know, obligation rates for specific programs vary wildly at the Federal Highway Administration and USDOT. There is a number of factors that implicate our ability to obligate. With the growth of discretionary programs in the last funding or authorization bill, we have seen a number of our partners who have received awards struggle to obligate.

So I think there is a number of factors. Sometimes it is the complexity of the program, and it can be the complexity of a project that is awarded, it can be the experience of the recipient that we have. And it can be the lateness in the awards being made in the given cycle with the Fiscal Year funds associated with it.

So we see a tremendous amount of difference in the ability. But it would be challenging to say one program versus another program are challenged more than others. If you dig a little bit deeper than that, you really have to kind of find out specifically the type of program, the capability of the awardee, and it kind of varies wildly across them.

I would be happy to work with you and provide specific data

so you can look at that and maybe talk more fully about what we are seeing within each specific program.

Senator Capito. Okay, let me ask you this, because you have referred to this twice about the ability of the awardee to follow through on a project. I believe IIJA opened up the ability for other certain awardees to apply for these, metropolitan planning organizations and others.

This is something that I have an interest in as we look forward to writing the next Surface Transportation bill, to make sure that we address this issue on the front end, rather than where you are addressing it, on the back end, can these folks really actually follow through with matching and technical expertise.

Is that what you are talking about, the NPOs and all that, that have been received? Because the State DOTs were already set up for this as they have been doing it for years.

Mr. McMaster. Yes, that is one of many factors, right? But the capabilities for people who haven't received an award before, it can be an impact on our ability to work with them to get them across the line to obligate those funds.

Senator Capito. But generally those wouldn't be State DOTs that you are talking about? Every State DOT is --

Mr. McMaster. State DOTs have more resources to address the specific challenges.

Senator Capito. Right. And then what happens is, that awardee comes to the State DOT for the help, too. Naturally, in a small State, in particular, you would go to your State DOT knowing that they had the extra piece.

Mr. McMaster. I wouldn't want to discount the interactions that my division offices will have with these --

Senator Capito. True.

Mr. McMaster. And also, I didn't mention one last factor, project readiness. Sometimes awards are made for projects that are, you know, way out in the future, and that can be a challenge as well.

Senator Capito. So how are you partnering with the State DOTs to ensure that we can successfully program, I want to ask about the August redistributions, I have talked about it. How do you see that issue? How can we get rid of that issue? How can we keep it from growing? And where are the pitfalls there?

Mr. McMaster. Yes, I mean, I think the growth we have seen in redistribution is a direct reflect of the complexities, and the growth of programs that we saw under IIJA. So pre-IIJA, you would see August redistribution in the $4 billion range. Today, it ranges from $7 billion to I think we have had over $9 billion.

Earlier this year, in January, we distributed an estimate to our State partners of about $8.5 billion as you referenced

earlier in your opening statement. And we are working closely with the States. This is not an easy task for them to plan ahead, to absorb. And we work closely with them, consistently from January.

We expect to issue an update on this, maybe as early as this week, but in the coming week or two, we will send a more current update to our State partners to let them know what we see as the current estimate for redistribution.

Senator Capito. So, by putting that out in January, you are basically informing the States that they need to get ready for this, so that they have programs ready, so they are not scrambling August 20th to try to figure out how to do their August 1st, or how to do this?

Mr. McMaster. That is exactly right. We start in January, giving them our initial best guess as to what we will see for redistribution. We update that some time around the middle of the year. And then we will let them know finally later on in the fall as to what the final redistribution numbers will look like and what they will receive after they request.

Senator Capito. So, last month you put out amendments to notices of funding opportunity for two discretionary programs that had previously been competed. Some applicants, including West Virginia's division of highways, are being required to reapply for projects.

Seems to me if you have applied once and received -- what is the story behind all this?

Mr. McMaster. Yes, thank you. Our efforts with these two programs in particular was to make sure that we cleaned out some unnecessary requirements from the last administration. Green and a DEI language was the particular area of focus for that. One of them in particular does have 2023 funds associated with it, the Scenic Byways Program. So we are particularly --

Senator Capito. Scenic Byways?

Mr. McMaster. Scenic Byways. We are particularly focused with that program. And a focus on project readiness, we know we have to award or obligate those funds before the end of the Fiscal Year, so we are really laser focused on that one in particular and making sure we don't have elapsing funds within --

Senator Capito. What is the other program? Scenic Byways is one. There are two that have --

Mr. McMaster. The planning at large, is that the one you are referring to?

Senator Capito. I don't know.

Mr. McMaster. The Bridge Planning. So we issued our updated Bridge Planning at Large --

Senator Capito. Bridge.

Senator Capito. -- NOFO, with up to $3 billion available.

So we would like to see, and so that was cleaned out as well as far as the requirements under the last administration. And we are looking forward to completing the application process here later this month, and then working expeditiously to award --

Senator Capito. I have gone over my time, sorry. Senator Whitehouse?

Senator Whitehouse. Thanks very much.

Welcome back, Administrator. There is a lot of stuff that is still jammed up and I think after a year and a half of this administration, it is getting a little stale to be blaming that on the Biden backlog, so-called.

My team asked you about two weeks ago for your current list of all of the awarded grants that are still pending action by the Department. And we have not received that. I am assuming that somewhere you actually have a list of what all the awarded grants are that are still pending action.

When might we get that list? We assumed that was something you could scroll off basically overnight.

Mr. McMaster. Ranking Member, I am aware of the request and we are processing that at the Department. As soon as I am able to share that, I absolutely will.

Senator Whitehouse. Give me a time frame.

Mr. McMaster. I know it is still under review, that request, and it is processing through the Department.

Senator Whitehouse. See, that is becoming one of my least favorite phrases. Because we see so much stuff that is "under review" that never seems to come to pass. And I want to make sure that I understand what the review is that this is under. We have asked you for a document that presumably exists. Just send it. Where is the review required in that?

It is beginning to look to me like "under review" is code for we are not going to do it, but we are unwilling to say so, because that would get us in legal trouble. If "under review" is a pretext, I would really advise you not to go down that road.

We have, for instance, as I mentioned in my opening remarks, the Charging and Fueling Infrastructure Program grants, there are 130 of them out there. One of them is in Rhode Island. It is more than $1 billion held up. And it has been held up for more than a year.

In theory, that is "under review." But then I see the administration Fiscal Year 2027 budget, which proposes to rescind all that obligated funding, which again, makes me think that perhaps "under review" is a pretext for not going to put the money out despite what Congress said in the hopes that we can successfully repeal it. So it is not really under review, it is being deliberately stalled in the hope of a rescission coming.

So, I guess I would want you to be a little bit clearer about why a list needs to be reviewed before it can be sent over here. And I would like to have you explain what really is the status with these charging and fueling infrastructure program grants. Because I will tell you that "under review" is really starting to sound like a pretext and not a real thing.

Mr. McMaster. Sure.

Senator Whitehouse. Give me your best shot.

Mr. McMaster. Senator, I appreciate your interest in these programs, and the grants. Specifically, CFI projects that you reference in there.

The Department and the Secretary has moved between 90 and 95 percent of all of the backlog through that departmental review. There are a handful of projects, and, but you mentioned the CFI program specifically, that are continuing to work through the departmental review process. I expect those will come out before long, it will have ultimate determination.

But those are the last remaining of the 3,200-plus grant awards that were made. I think it would be fair to say the last administration loved making awards, didn't do the work to obligate. I will tell you, the ones that have moved through Federal Highways, we are more than 60 percent obligated now for all of the awards that have moved through departmental review that we have under the Federal Highway Administration to date.

About $8.4 billion, which is almost on par with what the Biden administration did in four years, for obligations at Federal Highways.

So we are working aggressively to move through these projects. We do have a handful left under departmental review. I share your concern, and I would be happy to take that back and follow up with you and your team on the status of this. I am aware of your request.

Senator Whitehouse. You perceive my concern that, when zero of 130 grants have come through it doesn't look much like an individualized review. It looks like the entire program is being stalled, notwithstanding its status as law. And I think that it would be a mistake, a gain, to go down that path, if that is the path the Department of Transportation is going down.

My last question I will ask you now and you can answer for the record is that we are still trying to figure out what the anticipated dates are for when Federal Highways will put out the next funding opportunities for the IIJA funding. So I will just leave it at that.

With the Chairman's permission I will ask that you, for the record, give us a date when the list of the awarded grants that are still pending action by the Department will be provided to us. I don't think that is a very big ask. And that we get dates for the new funding opportunities, and that we get a

clearer, shall we say, explanation of why it is that zero of the 130 CFI program grants have cleared your process.

Mr. McMaster. Senator, I would be happy to. If you would like, I can answer a little bit on the notices of funding now.

Senator Capito. We are going to go to Senator Cramer.

Senator Cramer. Maybe I will leave a little time for you after that. But thank you for being here, Administrator. Thank you, Chairman.

I just feel compelled to respond somewhat to Senator Whitehouse's expressed frustration, both in his comments about the permitting reform negotiations and the most recent questioning. I told him at the last hearing on permitting reform that I would stipulate to the fact that the overwhelming evidence that the President or the administration of the other party is not very cooperative, whoever they are. We have a long, we can all write our own chapter of Presidents from the other party holding things up.

The point I want to get to is, this is why it is so, so important, the work that our leaders are doing, and everybody, on permitting reform, so that we can create a durable, statutory law that no President, regardless of party, can stop, undo a permit that has already been offered, or that they can stop work on something that has been permitted already.

So you just inspire me. Let's get this done.

That said, thank you for being here. I want to say thank you for being responsive, and specifically for your help in getting the West Fargo Bill to Grant Project completed and getting it signed earlier this year. It is really an important safety project.

I also want to echo the Chairman's response to your efforts with regard to safety. We put a lot of emphasis on the importance of building stuff. But if you don't have safe roads, they are not much value. So thank you for that.

You had talked a little bit about regulation reform and what-not, formula funding. I certainly support that, and join the Chairman in that. But I also want to ask you about, are there any opportunities, additional opportunities to eliminate bureaucratic burdens on States.

This is why Senator Kelly and I introduced together bipartisan legislation to reduce asset management reporting requirements, which will help our State DOTs. As it is now, they are required to file every year. Our bill simply says, how about every other year.

It sounds small, but it is a major paperwork burden that doesn't build any roads. It is just paperwork. And I would like a sense from you what you think of that as one possible way to reduce the burden on States.

Mr. McMaster. Yes, I mean, this administration, we are

laser focused on getting some of the Federal bureaucracy down. And we talk about regulatory reform a lot. The Department has issued 52 deregulatory actions, more than 600,000 words removed. We issued an IFR on NEPA process last year. We are working currently to update our NEPA process, Part 771 internally. So we will see if we have some action on that in the future.

We have simplified our notices of funding. We have cut them in half. We are adding a standardized template for applicants to make it easier for them, and we are tracking obligation rates and working quickly to try to make sure that the dollars that are awarded get into projects and actually get shovels turning quickly.

Everywhere I go and I speak to, I do ask the crowd to provide us with opportunities to reform things administratively, and give us those ideas that we can then put in practice to make it easier for not only our States but our local partners who rely on these Federal dollars and these Federal projects for safety and for economic enhancement.

I would be happy to work closely with you and the committee on any ideas to make sure it meets kind of your desires as to what you are hoping to see. But we very much share your interests in this and your concern. These programs can be overly burdensome at times, and anything we can do to move projects more quickly and more efficiently, we are absolutely

supportive of.

Senator Cramer. The House bill that came out of the committee, T&I Committee, they were 62 to 2, I mean, it was really overwhelming. Did some really good work. And one of the things that they did that has gotten a lot of heat, I guess, is that they added a fee for electric vehicles. I think it was $130 for electric vehicles and some smaller amount for plug-in hybrids.

Obviously, we have a shortage in the Highway Trust Fund, given the efficiency of vehicles and the sort of stagnant tax at the pump. It seems unreasonable to think that electric vehicles and others should use the roads without paying into the trust fund. And I don't know what the right formula is exactly, but I would be interested to know if you have an opinion or suggestion on how we fund the Highway Trust Fund and make sure that everybody that is using the roads are paying for them.

Mr. McMaster. Yes, Senator. I will just reiterate, I think, what the Secretary has said in this matter. His belief is that everyone who uses our roads should support the maintenance and operations and enhancement of the roads that they are using.

I know this is an area of focus for you, for the Congress, for the House as well. You mentioned the trust fund has some solvency challenges. But the Secretary believes strongly, and I

agree, that our people, our vehicles, the people who are using our roads should participate in supporting the maintenance, upkeep and operations of those roads.

Senator Cramer. Thank you. Thank you, Madam Chair.

Senator Capito. Senator Merkley?

Senator Merkley. Thank you, Madam Chairman.

It was so good to talk to you a couple of weeks ago. You mentioned in your testimony that you are really focused on large, durable projects that enhance safety. I raised several of them, I would like to raise them again.

One is the Hood River White Salmon Bridge. This is a bridge that is so narrow you might want to fold in your mirrors to avoid hitting. It is a 101-year-old bridge. It has a weight limitation, which means that semis crossing it have to go partially loaded. It has high traffic, at 4.4 million trips a year.

And it is ready for construction this fall. It just needs a sign-off on a grant. Washington State, rather than Oregon, is the applicant. And Washington State does not have a large or a major grant in this category.

So I just wanted to again raise it say, in the goal of restoring or replacing ancient infrastructure that doesn't fit the modern age, this is a great project.

MM: Senator, I share your comments, and I enjoyed the

conversation tremendously. I appreciate the importance of this project for the State of Oregon. Sounds like a great project.

Like I said, we are still in the process of reviewing the applications for the 26th round of funding.

Senator Merkley. I appreciated your offer to consider visiting it. I look forward to hosting you at the bridge. You will go, oh, yes -- and it scored even higher under the Trump administration's revised criteria than it did under the Biden administration criteria. So it is just well suited to this moment.

Second, I wanted to talk a little bit about the interstate bridge replacement over the Columbia River. There are seven lift bridges or drawbridges on the interstate system nationwide. But if you ask AI the question, which is the one that creates the most problem for congestion, well, the answer comes out, well, it is the I-5 bridge.

And why is that? Two large cities, Portland and Vancouver. It has 143,000 trips on a weekday. It has 10 hours of congestion every day. A single 10 to 15 minute opening in an off-peak period can trigger a traffic jam that takes hours to dissipate. It lacks safety shoulders. It lacks road merger lanes.

So it is like, if you look at the entire interstate system, I know you mentioned congestion being a factor, this is the

congestion king. And we need your help getting this baby underway, the replacement underway.

Mr. McMaster. Senator, I couldn't agree with you more on the importance of this project. My team, both in Oregon and Washington, are working daily with the project sponsors to move this project through the environmental process. We have some work to do on the grant agreement for the bridge grant. So we are working closely to line that up so that we are able to obligate that on time by the end of the Fiscal Year here in September.

But we do expect, unless something comes up through the process, that we will complete the environmental review close to the end of this month.

Senator Merkley. Great. That is terrific news. If I can follow up with you and your team, we would love to get a briefing on some of the previously awarded projects in Oregon, changes of project scopes, labor agreements, so on and so forth, just to keep trying to advance each project as quickly as possible.

Mr. McMaster. I'd be happy to do that.

Senator Merkley. That is terrific.

I-5, Siskiyou Wildlife Crossing, there has been extensive conversations between the Federal Highway Administration and Oregon Department of Transportation. They sent in a signed

contract on March 10th for final signature and approval. And they are looking forward to beginning work as soon as they can get a signature on that document.

Do you have a sense that that might be possible in the new few weeks?

Mr. McMaster. I am not familiar with the timing of that, but let me take that back and let me respond back to you shortly.

Senator Merkley. Thank you very much.

Senator Capito. Senator Curtis?

Senator Curtis. Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you, Administrator, for being here.

As you and I had a minute to talk before the meeting, we discussed the dynamic growth in Utah. What I would like to touch on just quickly is the formula for funding that is based upon a static, historical information and really doesn't take into account a State like Utah's rapid growth. You can imagine, that is very problematic for Utah, with the growth that we are experiencing.

So I guess my question is, as Congress considers the next Surface Transportation Reauthorization, how should we think about incorporating project population growth and travel demand in the formula?

Mr. McMaster. Yes, I know the formula is kind of a touchy

topic. It hasn't been adjusted dramatically for a little bit of time.

We would be happy to work closely with you. My understanding is, population, you can kind of back into that a little bit in certain capacities, but I don't think it directly associates itself with population growth. So, happy to work with you to provide information.

Senator Curtis. You, being familiar with our situation, you can see how frustrating that is to have that rapid growth not taken into consideration as we are getting funding.

I would like to bring up something my colleagues have talked about, this permitting and State flexibility. As you know, Utah has participated in the Federal Highway Administration NEPA assignment program, and it has demonstrated that States can successfully navigate this in a responsible way and do a good job.

So my question is, what other flexibilities could Congress authorize considering the Federal permitting process to help States build roads and bridges more efficiently?

Mr. McMaster. I appreciate your focus on permitting and permitting reform. As an administration, we share your interest in this. As we talk to industry and talk to folks and State partners, stakeholders all across, everybody raises this as a point of interest and a point of necessity.

We do require a lot of work on the permitting side in order to build projects. I am sure there are ways that we can reform this. I think we would be happy as an administration to talk further with you and the committee about ideas that we have put together or that we considered during the reauthorization process.

Senator Curtis. When you look to do that, I will just tell you, I would be curious in all ways that we can change it. Just to give you an example, when I was mayor of Provo, Utah's third largest city, we had a rule of thumb that if we used one dollar of Federal money it increased the cost of our project by 30 percent. So we could do all of the same work, all the environmental standards we could meet, but it increased the project by 30 percent.

Imagine, a 30 percent increase in funds just by simply changing a few policies, how many more roads that we could build.

So beyond just the NEPA and things like that, we would love to explore with you, block grants come to mind, block grant from the Federal Government and those regulations don't apply, States get that 30 percent extra margin. That is a big deal.

Mr. McMaster. I would be happy to work with you on that. I also want to give a shout-out to your DOT. They are fantastic on environmental work. You are at the head of the pack on that.

Senator Curtis. That is just a really good example that States can do it responsibly and where they can, and they have demonstrated they can, the more we can hand off, the better.

I would like to talk to you a little bit about transit-oriented developments. Congress faces growing fiscal constraints. We should be looking for ways to stretch transportation dollars further and attract additional private and local investment, rather than relying solely on new Federal spending. The TIFIA program has historically been one of the Federal Government's most effective tools for leveraging non-Federal capital for major investments. I am pleased to sponsor, with Senator Blunt Rochetser, the Build HUBS Act, which is intended to help communities maximize the benefits of transportation investments through existing financial tools.

As you know, Utah has this unique situation where 80 percent of our population lives within about an 80-mile segment there, and transit-oriented hubs are very effective. So as we consider the next Surface Transportation Reauthorization, could you discuss the role these programs play in helping communities maximize the long-term value of transportation investment and leveraging private parties?

Mr. McMaster. Well, the TIFIA program is run out of the Build America Bureau, which is run out of the Secretary's office. But what I would say is it is a fantastic tool for

States and localities to leverage to build important infrastructure projects. There is not enough Federal dollars to go around in the loan programs at TIFIA, or at the Bureau, TIFIA in particular are fantastically important and well-utilized. They have a long backlog. That just speaks to the value of those programs at the Bureau.

Happy to take back the specific comments here, share them with the Bureau, and then follow up with you directly. However we can be helpful.

Senator Curtis. Good. And I couldn't end without an invitation to come see us in Utah and explore some of these projects together.

Mr. McMaster. I would like that very much. I appreciate that.

Senator Curtis. Thank you.

Senator Capito. Senator Padilla?

Senator Padilla. Thank you, Madam Chair.

Senator Blunt Rochester might have been here before me? Okay.

Mr. Administrator, thank you for being here, for your work.

I want to call to your attention -- oh, Senator Alsobrooks was here before me. Then I will be happy to defer. Are you sure? Okay.

Mr. Administrator, California has several projects that

were awarded funding in previous Fiscal Years that have not been able to move forward, either because obligations have stalled, or because other final actions remain pending. Many of these projects, California is a big State, and big economy, so these projects are not narrow or small investments. Several carry significant regional economic impact, and they represent Federal dollars that have already been approved and committed.

Now, in your testimony, you said, "The Trump administration has proven it is possible to deliver projects faster." You also said, "The administration is committed to working together with States to accelerate project delivery."

I share that goal. I want to work with you to bring that to bear on the projects that I bring to your attention. Because it is hard to square that, the public commitment and then the project delays that we are feeling first-hand.

More than $160 million, for example, for highway infrastructure in the Bay Area, $105 million to improve safety for drivers and pedestrians near the Port of Redwood City, nearly $100 million for interchange improvements in the Central Valley. Again, these are projects that this committee has voted to fund already, and are sitting idle because of this administration.

I will submit for the record a full list of California grants that remain held up, and am requesting status updates on

each. Will you commit to working with me to get these projects moving along?

Mr. McMaster. Let me take that request back and see what we can provide to you. But I am happy to work with you on this. It is a huge focus of interest for the Secretary and the administration and the DOT.

I think I mentioned before, the Secretary's re3view process is 90 to 95 percent complete. There are some that are just continuing to work through the process, and we will see some progress with those as well.

Senator Padilla. I must underscore, projects approved, projects this committee has voted to fund, paperwork is in, just need the dollars to flow so the work can continue.

I will be submitting some questions for the record in regard to electric vehicles. I know Senator Cramer, when he was here, talked about the equity of contributions into the Highway Trust Fund. So I will go on record saying, I agree, everybody should be paying their fair share.

But they should be paying their fair share, not a disproportionate share. In light of the current gas prices that are going on right now, I know there are two simultaneous debates, should electric vehicle owners be paying or paying more, while there are some suggesting that we should provide gas tax relief. If we are going to be fair, let's be fair. Let's

be consistent.

The question for the record that I will submit are in regard to more than $1 billion in charging projects that are also shovel-ready, with funding awarded and waiting to be put to work. While the funding is not moving, it is not just contractors that aren't being hired or chargers that aren't being built, there are families that are locked into the high prices that the Country is experiencing right now, and not being able to better exercise options for what types of vehicles they want.

With gas prices these days, electric vehicles are a lot more attractive to people than in years past. So again, questions for the record.

Last area I want to raise with you, back to the unexplained pauses in Federal grants. That is concerning under any circumstances, in California especially, given the upcoming Olympic and Paralympic games in 2028. As you know, the games are coming in 2028, and the President himself has called these "America's Games." The White House is committed to the success of these games.

Los Angeles Metro has already committed more than $16 billion of its own money, local taxpayer money, to capital projects in preparation, and is seeking $1.9 billion in Federal transportation investment to ensure America's Games run

smoothly.

Earlier this year, I wrote to Secretary Duffy seeking his support for this request. In his response, he encouraged LA Metro to use existing formula grant and credit programs to meet its capital needs. So, Metro did exactly that. Metro is currently constructing an express lane on the I-105 Freeway, which helps connect LAX and the central business district, which is crucial to the region's mobility plans.

As a part of that effort, Metro has been working with DOT's Build America Bureau for years. The Bureau invited Metro to apply for an $849 million TIFIA loan in October of 2025. It is my understanding that the Council on Credit and Finance was expected to consider that loan at its February meeting. But the project was never placed on the agenda.

LA Metro estimated that if this TIFIA loan is not considered at the next meeting, it could result in an additional $300 million cost for LA County taxpayers.

Last question, Mr. Administrator. Can you confirm that the Build America Bureau's Council on Credit and Financial consider this loan in the coming days? Time is of the essence.

Mr. McMaster. I appreciate the level of concern and interest on this one. I am not sure about the status of this, but let me take that back and let me follow up with you and your office.

Senator Padilla. Okay. We will be following up, and I can't emphasize enough, time is of the essence.

Mr. McMaster. I appreciate that.

Senator Capito. Thank you.

Senator Ricketts?

Senator Ricketts. Mr. Administrator, it is good to see you. Thank you for coming to testify in front of our committee. We appreciate that.

You have been very hard at work investing in America's roads and bridges. I know that having talked to my Nebraska Department of Transportation, that you made yourself personally available to sit down with the States to understand what their particular issues are, and that accessibility is very much appreciated.

Nebraska has a large portfolio of bridges, about 15,000 in our highway system. One of the things I did when I was governor is we created a county match program from the State level to be able to help counties manage their bridges. And that was very successful in encouraging innovation and helping counties to be able to pay for the cost of replacing aging bridges.

Partnership with the Federal Highway Administration helped build on that foundation and continued to improve the bridges in our State. We are grateful for the work that Federal Highway has done in supporting bridge projects in rural States.

Recently, Nebraska received $15.5 million from the Competitive Highway Bridge Program to complete infrastructure projects in Nebraska.

Under Chairman Capito's leadership, we are currently drafting our portion of the Surface Transportation Reauthorization bill. How important is it for Congress to direct money toward roads and bridges, those projects, like the Capitol City Connector, over duplicative programs that can't be used by all States?

Mr. McMaster. Well, I will say, in this administration, our focus is really on roads and bridges at the Federal Highway Administration. It is that core infrastructure. I know we talked a little bit about the statistics earlier in the hearing. Ninety-one percent of all transportation trips are on our roads and our bridges. Eighty-seven percent are personal occupancy vehicles.

So the American traveling public has decided this is the way they want to commute or work or go to social or other activities and move product. So this is the core infrastructure. It is the reason Federal Highways was created. It is the reason we exist. It is the reason.

It also generates our revenues. It is our roads and bridges. So we are laser focused on the type of infrastructure that is going to matter the most to the most people. There are

other kinds of transportation and other ways to travel. Those are fine, and those are also necessary and helpful in certain communities. There is no one way to commute or to work or to live.

But the core responsibilities of the Federal Highway Administration, our core focus is to make sure that our roads and bridges are maintained, enhanced, to the extent they need to be. So we are laser focused on the types of projects that are going to make sure that we have the bridges in the right condition. I think today we have more than 40,000 bridges in poor condition around the Country. So we do need to address bridge safety, bridge conditions. We need to continue to make investments in those areas, and we are going to do that. But we really want to maintain focus on our roads and bridges and make sure they are in perfect working order sufficient for all of our communities around the Country.

Senator Ricketts. That makes complete sense, that we focus on roads and bridges.

I am a big fan of streamlining processes. As governor, one of the things I implemented was Lean Six Sigma to streamline our processes at the State of Nebraska to be able to make them work better and to cut waste. For example, one of the things we were able to do was streamline our air construction permitting process to go from 110 steps down to 22, and we were able to

reduce the time it takes to issue those permits from 198 days to 65 days.

We also worked with Federal Highways to assume the NEPA assignment while I was governor as well, and I was pleased to see that Nebraska signed an updated memorandum, and we talked about that a little bit before the hearing. So thank you very much for that as well.

States are seeing some of the amazing grant money going out the door. Can you speak to the efficiency improvements that you have implemented and what further efficiencies Federal Highway Administration is working on?

Mr. McMaster. Well, I talked to you a little bit about the process we have internally. We have talked a little bit about the backlog and where we sit today. Of the more than 1,500 grants that have been approved through the backlog at the Federal Highway Administration, we are more than 60 percent of the way through that backlog to date.

We have obligated $8.4 billion of that backlog, which is almost on par with the four years of the last administration. So in little over one year, we have almost caught up with the four years of the Biden administration as far as obligating of funds.

So we are continuing to push these dollars out and do the real work to get projects moving.

Regarding getting money out, we have cut our notices of funding in half as far as the amount of words included in them, reduced the complexity. We have standardized the template for application. Our goal is to get people to be able to apply easily to obligate these funds and get these projects built.

We have in the first year, we have moved more projects, distributed more funds, obligated more funds than the fourth year of the Biden administration. Also, we reduced environmental timelines on environmental assessments by six months on average for over 44 different environmental agreements. We are close to about 22 years in environmental savings just in the first year of the Trump administration.

So, our focus right now is to make sure projects move and move quickly. As you all know, the longer it takes to get projects in the ground, the more expensive these projects get, the more delayed the safety enhancements and the economic enhancements of these projects are.

So we are laser focused on doing this in the Federal Highway Administration. Year one, we saw some tremendous success. Year two, we expect to improve on that.

Senator Ricketts. Great. Well, I am out of time, but I would encourage you to continue to look for ways to be able to streamline these processes, whether you are working with the EPA, Fish and Wildlife, Army Corps of Engineering, or if you

have specific suggestions for us in Congress, please let us know on things we can do. As the Ranking Member talked about, the effort to get permitting reform done in this committee, we certainly appreciate your feedback.

Mr. McMaster. We share your interest in that.

Senator Capito. Thank you.

Senator Alsbrooks?

Senator Alsobrooks. Thank you so much to Chair Capito, and thank you so much, Administrator McMaster, for being here today.

I just have a few questions. The first one is regarding Disadvantaged Business Enterprise Program recertification. For decades, Congress has supported the Disadvantaged Business Enterprise Program on a bipartisan basis. This program ensures that small and disadvantaged businesses have a fair opportunity to compete for federally-funded transportation projects.

In 2025 alone, Mayland had over 9,235 DBEs, and they play a really critical role in delivering transportation projects across our State, from highway construction and transportation improvements to major infrastructure investments, like the Purple Line.

The Department's interim final rule changed how disadvantaged status is determined, and requires existing DBEs to be recertified. This action was especially disruptive for projects in progress striving to achieve their DBE goals.

So, Administrator, you have spoken, I know, about the need to advance infrastructure projects efficiently by reducing unnecessary burdens on project sponsors. Yet, State DOTs, local agencies and contractors are telling us that this new recertification requirement has created additional paperwork for them, increased their compliance costs and introduced uncertainty for projects that were already under contract.

So I wonder, how does requiring States to recertify or to revisit certifications, update compliance procedures and devote additional resources to recertification, how do these things, how do you reconcile them? How do they, in your mind, advance your goal of accelerating project delivery?

Mr. McMaster. Well, from the administration's standpoint, it is critical that we recertify these DBEs consistent with the Supreme Court's recent decision. We want to make sure that race and sex-based determinations are not utilized on a State level, local level, when it comes to contracting.

So we do have States right now, or locals, recertifying companies. We have had a couple of State plans come back to the Department, the Federal Highway Administration, we are working through that process right now, to make sure these recertifications, these plans can carry forward, so we don't have unnecessary delays.

I share your concern on delaying projects. We obviously

care tremendously. We don't want to necessarily see that. But this is an important reform that we need to make at the Department, the Federal Highway Administration. And if we have challenges on the State level, we absolutely want to hear about that and work with them to move that through the process as quickly as possible.

Senator Alsobrooks. I still believe that small businesses, disadvantaged businesses are a huge part of our economy. They are especially important. I wonder, how do you ensure that they are not unfairly excluded in this great effort to essentially erase from consideration women and others? How do you make sure that they are not excluded from federally-funded transportation opportunities during this transition period?

Mr. McMaster. Well, we absolutely share your interest in making sure that small businesses are not negatively impacted. They are an absolutely critical part of our economy and the communities around the Country.

Our focus right now is making sure that race and sex-based prioritization is not included in this process. Once that is recertified out, we want to make sure these small businesses have every opportunity to compete and win contracts and carry through the work, especially in the Federal Highway Administration space.

Senator Alsobrooks. I would be curious to know what

percentage of certified DBEs have successfully completed recertification, and what the timeline is for completing recertification for those who are remaining. If you know that, can you let us know? If not, can you just get back to me and let me know what percentage have been successful in recertifying?

Mr. McMaster. I will take that back and follow up with you directly.

Senator Alsobrooks. Okay, thank you.

Just very quickly, regarding the Bridge Investment Program, Congress created the Bridge Investment Program to fund nationally significant bridge projects, and included statutory language to ensure that broad geographic distribution of awards would happen.

Maryland remains among the States, however, that have not yet received awards under the program's framework. And Maryland has applied for approximately $864 million for the American Legion Bridge, which is a major bridge replacement and corridor modernization effort in one of the most congested transportation corridors in the Nation.

So as the Department evaluates future bridge investment awards, can you discuss how the Federal Highway Administration is assessing large, nationally significant bridge replacement projects, such as the American Legion Bridge? More

specifically, how does the Department view projects in States that have not yet received either a large bridge project award or two bridge project awards under the program's statutory framework?

Mr. McMaster. I will speak to the bridge program in general, and the prioritization. This is a unique requirement under the Bridge Investment Program. We still have a little bit more work to do for Fiscal Year 2026 funds for awards. There are a handful of localities that have not received what the required amounts of award are.

You mentioned Maryland. So, we are still working through that. We have the large bridge applications in that we are processing. We hope to have that out, I think, later summer would be my expectation.

And then we just released our amended, updated NOFO, so we are taking applications and comments from our applicants for the planning in that large component.

So with those two components and upwards of $3 billion that we have at the Federal Highway Administration to administer, we expect to complete the prioritization requirements of the program and if there are excess funds, then distribute those to worthy projects around the Country.

You mentioned the American Legion Bridge project in particular. The Secretary released his Freedom to Drive

initiative earlier in April this year, challenging governors to provide us with comments on the two to five most congested pain points in their States, with a plan to address those. The Federal Government wants to be a partner to address those most congested points.

You saw earlier this year, we issued an RFI on the American Legion Bridge. This is a bridge in our back yard here, in the capital of the United States that is heavily congested. I heard a statistics on the American Legion, I can't speak to the veracity of it, but they talk about what rush hour means in a normal capacity, might be two, three, four hours. American Legion Bridge has a 12-hour rush hour.

So, it is a very significant, congested project. We look forward to working with the State of Maryland.

Senator Alsobrooks. Okay, let's say then, you probably agree with me then that the annual $64 million for that bridge is critical to not just us but to the region. Thank you so much.

Senator Capito. Having been on the American Legion Bridge -- that place is always so packed. And what is it, five lanes going both ways or something? It is an enormous bridge.

Senator Husted?

Senator Husted. Thank you, Chair Capito. I want to add my voice of encouragement for the work that you and Ranking Member

Whitehouse are doing on trying to get permitting reform done. It is critical to every conversation that we have in this committee. I believe that it is one of these things that we can help build more trust in governing in this Country as we have a permitting process that actually allows government to get things done on time and on cost and on budget.

So, Administrator McMaster, thank you for coming to Ohio for the groundbreaking for the Brent Spence Bridge Corridor Project. As you know, that is a huge bridge project corridor because it has two highways that come together, I-71 and I-75, that has an enormous amount of truck traffic, passenger traffic, and is essential freight corridor for the Country. Thank you for being there.

But getting it done on time and, I believe that the target date is 2033 for that, is of course incredibly important. Because it is a multi-year, multi-contract bid process.

What approvals, reimbursements, or NEPA evaluations remain with that? And do we think that permitting reform helps with getting this done? Is everything on track? Help us put that in perspective as we look at this 2033 date.

Mr. McMaster. My understanding is that they have broken ground, they have started demolition. So the environmental work is complete. And I believe they have all the permits they need to move forward.

There was one right up until the event, I think, but they do have all their permits. I am happy to double back.

Senator Husted. So based on your knowledge, we are locked in, this is headed toward a 2033 completion?

Mr. McMaster. That is my understanding. And I would be excited to see that one. It is an exciting moment. It has been in the works for decades. That is a big, important, impactful project that carries 3 percent of our GDP across it annually. It is a necessary project. I was happy to participate in the groundbreaking event.

Senator Husted. Yes, it is an incredibly important project.

Speaking of time, keeping things on time, I know that expeditious completion of projects and approvals and permits is important. And that making sure those things happen, because they improve safety and decrease costs, are incredibly important. I know that I get calls, though, somewhat frequently, from county engineers and others in Ohio regarding project labor agreements and whether or not a Federal highway is going to give guidance and timelines approval for those projects in a more expeditious way.

Could you give us an update on that, where that stands?

Mr. McMaster. Yes. We are issuing project labor agreements consistent with our 2010 guidance. We have issued a

number of them already this year. If you have a specific request, I would be happy to take that back and check in on the status of that.

But we are working closely with sponsors regarding their request for PLAs. And we are issuing and have issued --

Senator Husted. And so you are issuing them, you are moving forward according to the 2010 guidance?

Mr. McMaster. Consistent with our 2010 guidance.

Senator Husted. Okay, great. Thank you.

I also get some questions every once in a while, and I think the city of Columbus is one of these that, we are heading into the summer, tourist season. We have World Cup, lots of things going on in our Nation. And there are questions about some of the pedestrian way-finding kiosks and things along those lines, about whether they are permissible to be used in federally-funded rights-of-way. And I was just curious if you know where the guidance on that stood and whether or not we would have a decision in the near future with all of these events coming up this summer.

Mr. McMaster. Yes, I appreciate your interest in this. I am not up to speed on the exact place for this. But let me check into this and let me follow up with you as early as this week and give you kind of an updated estimate on where this sits. I know this has been a point of interest for your State.

And let me find out what the status of this is, and maybe we can work together to find some resolution here.

Senator Husted. That would be great. Because I know new technologies arrive, things are happening quickly, and sometimes the process is slow to contemplate those things. But I think the faster, whether it is things we do, it is our responsibility through permitting reform. Surely the administration has an interest in seeing this getting done as well.

Bridge projects, project labor agreements, rulings on some of these other things, the government is the roadblock or the facilitator of these things getting done more quickly.

So I know that that is important to you, and I just encourage you to continue to prioritize speed and delivery in these things. Because we create congestion when we don't give answers to people in a timely manner. And so please, please make sure that you prioritize these things. I just want to give you that encouragement. Thank you.

Senator Capito. Thank you.

Senator Blunt Rochester?

Senator Blunt Rochester. Thank you, Chair Capito and I thank you, Mr. Administrator, for being here.

I want to start off by encouraging, saluting, reinforcing the comments that Senator Curtis made about transit-oriented development. Our Build HUBS Act is one that crisscrosses a few

of the committees I serve on, including Housing, and the ability to unlock housing. So it is also very important.

We are here to discuss the Federal Highway Administration's budget, but I would be remiss if I didn't start out by talking about the staggering gas prices and what people are feeling at the pump across the Country, which is why it is so important that we do deliver on the promises of the Bipartisan Infrastructure, and a need for a strong highway budget and to support affordability and reliability of our transportation systems.

That brings me to my first question for you, Mr. McMaster. During your confirmation hearing, you committed to full transparency on the status of discretionary grants. But my team has been having some challenges getting updates on Delaware projects. It is kind of a theme, as well.

We have been told, this is the quote, that there are "no specific timelines" for getting these out the door. So first, I would like to raise one of the projects. If you have any update or if you can share with us, one is DelDOT's Fiscal Year 2022-2023 Strategic Innovation for Revenue Collection program award for the Paving the Way to a National Solution, a 10-State mileage-based user fee collaboration project.

This 10-State pilot will test and identify new solutions to support the long-term funding of our highway systems. These

pilots are particularly important given the high price of gas, and also the Highway Trust Fund's accelerating insolvency. So this is a two-fold, this is really important.

Mr. McMaster, can you provide a clear status update on this award?

Mr. McMaster. I apologize, I am not up to speed on the specific grant or the request that you previously made. So I apologize for that, if we didn't respond timely, to get back to you with a status update. But I have heard you, let me take that back and let me get you a status update here really quickly, and we will see what we can do to find some resolution.

Senator Blunt Rochester. That would be great. Like I said, this one, it is a win-win, and also, it is 10 States that are included. Will you commit, and I think I heard you say you will commit, to working with DelDOT to ensure that these funds are obligated and released without further delay? That is what I am hoping will be the commitment. That is what I am hoping we will get a response.

When do you think we could at least get a response on the status?

Mr. McMaster. Let me check on the status this week and see if we can get back to you quickly.

Senator Blunt Rochester. Did you say this week?

Mr. McMaster. Yes.

Senator Blunt Rochester. Okay, good.

Mr. McMaster. If I can help it, I don't like to delay things.

Senator Blunt Rochester. I appreciate that.

Mr. McMaster. I would like to take care of this and see if we can't get you a status.

Senator Blunt Rochester. Thank you.

Mr. McMaster. If it is still under departmental review, we will try to work through and see what we can do to expedite.

Senator Blunt Rochester. Thank you.

The second one I wanted to ask about is the City of Newark has a charging and fueling infrastructure grant. The over $590,000 will help install EV and e-bike charging stations.

This is really important for University of Delaware, because it is our main campus where students are particularly seeking the e-bike infrastructure to reduce their transportation costs. As we can imagine, if families are experiencing the challenge, students are experiencing it even more.

So, could you also, if you don't have that information today, could you add that to the update list as well?

Mr. McMaster. Yes, happy to specifically for that one grant. I will tell you broadly, I do know that the awards under the CFI program are still under departmental review.

I mentioned this earlier; I will reiterate. Of the 3,200

backlog, 90 to 95 percent has already moved through the system successfully from the Secretary's side. We are working aggressively to obligate those that have. This program is one of the last remaining tranches of awards that are still under review for determination.

So I would be happy to follow up with you on that one. But I do know that program is still under review at the Department. But we are working quickly through that.

Senator Blunt Rochester. I would greatly appreciate that, especially again, like I said, in this moment, students are struggling. They in particular would benefit from this grant getting out the door.

Lastly, I will just follow up with your office. One of the issues that we are looking at is road safety for older adults. This is something that my team and I would like to follow up with you on as well.

Mr. McMaster. I would like that.

Senator Blunt Rochester. Thank you, and I yield back.

Senator Capito. Thank you.

Senator Kelly?

Senator Kelly. Thank you, Madam Chair. I like the new chairs. Aren't they nice?

Senator Capito. They are. You can actually get around them. That is the better part.

Senator Kelly. Mr. McMaster, thank you for being here today. I want to discuss transportation planning in rural communities. To help facilitate transportation and local buy-in, Metropolitan Planning Organizations, or MPOs, bring local leaders together in urban areas to identify regional transportation priorities.

Would you agree that these MPOs are effective at bringing together local leaders and to develop and execute projects?

Mr. McMaster. Yes. Metropolitan Planning Organizations and Rural Transportation Planning Organizations play an important role in making sure that not only local but State transportation plans are developed consistent with the priorities of all of the communities within the State.

Senator Kelly. I agree. And that is why MPOs get dedicated funding out of the Highway Trust Fund.

But MPOs only exist in urban areas. Small cities, rural communities, they often get left out.

Years ago, Congress created an equivalent program for rural communities called Regional Transportation Planning Organizations. But there has never been dedicated funding provided in the Highway Trust Fund to fund them.

I think that has been a real disservice to rural communities. It is another way where they are just left behind. Projects that go through a local planning process are delivered

more efficiently with fewer delays and have more community support. All of that likely means that projects can be delivered at lower cost when we do this and we fund them.

Administrator McMaster, in your experience as a transportation professional, do you think that dedicated planning funding would help rural communities deliver projects faster and at a lower cost?

Mr. McMaster. I do know that these rural communities and RTPOs work closely with their State partners. If you are considering that in reauthorization or other legislation, we would be happy to work with you and provide technical assistance as to what that could mean and how that could be implemented.

Senator Kelly. Has the Federal Highway Administration looked at opportunities to provide dedicated transportation planning funding to RTPOs to ensure that these entities have the resources to provide quality support for rural communities?

Mr. McMaster. We do provide technical assistance within our division offices for our Regional Transportation Planning Organizations. As far as specific funding, I am not aware of that. But we do provide technical assistance. We work closely with the RTPOs in the planning process.

Senator Kelly. Well, let me just say, I hope that we can look for opportunities to work together on this to make sure rural communities have the support. We are going to look for

opportunities in the Surface Transportation bill to do this.

I also want to ask a question here about the challenges facing tribal communities. As you know, many roads on tribal land are in very poor shape.

The Navajo Nation, we have hundreds of miles of unpaved, poorly maintained roads. They often wash out in rainstorms. School buses get stuck taking kids to and from school. Even teachers have a hard time getting to these schools.

So it is hard to find teachers who want to work on the Navajo Nation, because the roads are so poor. Kids there then get a poorer education.

All of this is a real problem. I think we need to look at how the Tribal Transportation Program managed by the Federal Highway Administration can help fix this. We need to make sure that this program is well-funded. But we also need to make sure that tribes aren't bogged down in undue permitting processes.

Administrator McMaster, is it accurate to assume that most tribal transportation projects take place on tribal trust land?

Mr. McMaster. That is my understanding. I share your interest in supporting our tribal nations across the Country. It is a significant need that they have. Resources are challenging on tribal communities.

We have a number of programs directly addressing tribal needs and tribal projects. I would look forward to working with

you to address these needs further.

Senator Kelly. Thank you for that.

I spend a good amount of time on the Navajo Nation. In Arizona, it is almost as big as West Virginia. It has a population of 225,000 tribal members. So it is incredibly rural, has significant challenges delivering services, power, water, and roads are such a challenge. Because to get these roads improved, to get a company up there to do the work, it is often twice as expensive as getting it done in Maricopa County.

So I appreciate that you would be willing to work with us on this to improve the infrastructure on these tribal lands. Thank you.

Senator Sullivan. [Presiding.] I am going to call on myself. Mr. McMaster, good to see you.

I do want to just follow up on what Senator Kelly was talking about. He and I are working closely together on this, really highlighting the Tribal Transportation Program in the next Federal Highway bill. There is a lot of work we can be doing together on this. It is very bipartisan. There are some things we are going to try and get in the Highway bill, and we are working on it here. I want to thank Senator Kelly for highlighting these issues, the logistical realities of tribal communities.

We don't have Indian Country like they do in Arizona, with

reservations, as you know, Mr. McMaster. We have a very different structure, with the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act and our Alaska Native Corporations, which actually own the land.

But we still have the challenges. We have over 230 communities in Alaska that you know are not connected by any roads.

So will you commit, to Senator Kelly's point and mine, to continue your agency's support for the Tribal Transportation Program, to protect the resources and maybe add them as we work on the Highway bill?

Mr. McMaster. I would like that very much.

Senator Sullivan. Great, thank you.

Now, I know you are going to get to Alaska here at the end of June, early July. We are really, really looking forward to having you. Thanks for coming. I always like to say we are a resource-rich, infrastructure-poor State. We have more natural resources than probably any place in the world, oil, gas, minerals. You name it, we got it.

But we don't have roads. We don't have infrastructure. We are almost 120 times bigger than Connecticut, and we have less road miles than Connecticut. So whenever we are working roads, whenever we are working the Highway Bill, we are always about trying to get more infrastructure to our State.

Like I said, 82 percent of Alaskan communities are not connected by roads. This is something that no other State in the Country has challenges like that.

So let me talk about one road. It is called the King Cove Road, that I am sure you are familiar with. The President of the United States is familiar with it, in a really good, supportive way. It is a single-lane, 11-mile gravel road that would provide reliable year-round service between King Cove and the all-weather airport nearby called Cold Bay.

We have been trying to get that permitted and built for over 30 years. Thirty years. Now, this is where I don't agree with my colleagues on the other side of the aisle. Radical far-left environmental groups have made it their passion in life to stop this road. It is unbelievable. It is ridiculous.

This road will save lives. No exaggeration. We had a hearing a number of years ago, there was over 18 people killed in King Cove as they were trying to get out of King Cove in bad weather, people had emergencies. The Coast Guard commandant, we did a hearing. He said it was just outrageous that you can't build a 9-mile single-lane gravel road to save lives.

So the President of the United States has explicitly said he needs to get this road done. So with the summer construction in our State rapidly approaching, will you commit to prioritizing and finalizing any necessary Federal actions with

other Federal agencies, so we can build that incredible road?

By the way, every Alaskan wants this road built. It is out on the Aleutian Island Chain. Every Alaskan, Democrats, Republicans. Because it is a symbol, it is a symbol of an uncaring Federal Government and far-left radicals who care more about birds than people.

So can I get your commitment to do everything you can to get this project to successfully break ground? Maybe when you are in Alaska, you and I can go with a couple shovels and start digging it.

It would be so welcomed in my State. Nobody, virtually nobody, opposes the King Cove Road. It is all lower 48 radical enviros who have no business trying to harm my people and my constituents.

So can I get your commitment on that, Mr. Administrator?

Mr. McMaster. Absolutely. I look forward to it. We have a tribal transportation program agreement with the tribe in the area.

Senator Sullivan. Yes, they are going to build a lot of it.

Mr. McMaster. We look forward to providing technical assistance as is helpful and necessary for folks. You have my commitment to work with you to push this.

Senator Sullivan. Great. Well, listen, the other thing I

want to talk about is permitting. I am obsessed with that. We are making really good progress.

I want to thank the Chairman, Chairman Capito. I want to thank Ranking Member Whitehouse. Senator Whitehouse is a good friend of mine. We are making more progress on permitting reform, serious, statutory, NEPA and other permitting reform, which will be incredible for the United States of America.

You may have seen, we had a hearing here with the head of the Business Roundtable, the head of the Laborers International Union, LIUNA, and others, saying, we get permitting reform done, that can unleash, the permitting reform we are working on in this committee, in a bipartisan way, that could unleash $1.2 trillion to $2 trillion of capital in America, private capital, that sits on the sidelines and won't come in because they know, on a road in Alaska, I am going to talk about the Cooper Bypass Project, the EIS on that took 37 years. Longest EIS in the history of America. Not a good thing that we had in Alaska.

By the way, really quick on that, Secretary Chao, when she was Secretary of Transportation, did a great job, Trump won. She was coming to visit Alaska. I said, Madam Secretary, please, you have to come up to Alaska and finalize this EIS. No State, no community should have to wait 37 years for an EIS under NEPA.

And you know what Secretary Chao did? She came up to

Alaska; she planted the flag. She said, here is a record of decision, get building this.

I was there last weekend. This week, we are, for this Cooper Bypass Project, this week, we are going to be, it is unbelievable, maybe you and I can go visit it, laying out the largest single bridge span ever laid out in North America. It is 1,000 feet across a remote canyon. It is going to be the highest bridge in Alaska; 1,000 feet.

I was just there, it is unbelievable. This week we are moving it, to lay it. It is an engineering marvel.

So maybe you and I can go see it. That is what happens when you finally get permitting done in the right way. We are trying to get it done here.

But I want to ask you, what steps are you and the Federal Highway Administration taking to ensure that as we are working on permitting reform, that we are accelerating things already? Don't wait on us, right? And please, never, ever ever have an EIS that takes almost four decades. That is just unfair to Alaskans and the American people.

But what actions are you taking to make sure that that Cooper Landing EIS project will never happen again? For Democrats, Republicans, Arizona doesn't like it, Alaska doesn't like it. None of this is good for the Country.

Mr. McMaster. I appreciate your passion on this one.

Senator Sullivan. I am very passionate about it, because my State is ground zero, like I said, for these radical groups that want to stop anything. They want to stop building roads, they want to stop building economic projects. All they do is hurt Alaskans. They hurt my constituents, and they don't care, right?

They have a very different agenda. Shut down the great State of Alaska, kill jobs and turn it into a giant national park. We are not a giant national park. We are a State with people who need jobs and wealth, good strong communities. And connecting them by roads is a really strong way to do it.

So, on permitting, what exactly are you doing on that? Can you commit to me to continue your hard work on it?

Mr. McMaster. Absolutely. I will start at the end. You absolutely have our commitment to support the Congress in the critical work you are doing on permitting reform and environmental, NEPA, wherever this takes us or you in your process. At the Department, the Secretary issued an IFR last year to adjust our NEPA process. We are looking at a rulemaking right now inside on our Part 771 process as well.

Senator Sullivan. Good.

Mr. McMaster. So we are looking at that. I will say, last year at the Federal Highway Administration, and I tell people, this is like our brute force work, this is just putting manpower

on it, working closely with our State partners to move these environmental assessments forward, we were able to shave almost six months per environmental assessment across 44 last year.

Senator Suollivan. Great. That just helps everybody.

Mr. McMaster. So in a little bit under 22 years of, I guess, savings in that regard, but we are looking forward to making additional progress this year. If I tell you it is a little over three years on average for an environmental assessment, when the law, and I credit Chair Capito for One Federal Decision, you have to have a target. Otherwise you are never going to shoot and hit.

So having this one-year environmental assessment target is important.

Senator Sullivan. Yes.

Mr. McMaster. It is really hard for people to hit for a multitude of different reasons. But it is a shining star for us to point to.

Senator Sullivan. Good.

Mr. McMaster. We have been able to move the needle slightly. But we are hoping to continue to drive that forward and create additional savings for our project sponsors.

Senator Sullivan. It is a great goal, and I really like the fact that you are putting that target out.

I think as a country, we just got used to this, and we

started to accept it. Oh, yeah, 10-year EIS, 6-year EIS, nine years to permit a bridge, it happened so often that the American people kind of became numb. And even this Congress became numb.

It is ridiculous. It is insane that you have nine years to permit a bridge, or an average, your area, this is a study of numbers, yours go 9 to 19 years to get highways done from design to completion. Nineteen years for a highway.

No wonder China is kicking our butt, right? They don't take that long to build infrastructure.

So I love the fact that you guys are having the whole Country reimagine what should be rational. One year for an EIS is plenty. And we should go for that target.

So thank you on that.

Mr. McMaster. I agree.

Senator Sullivan. Let me end with a couple other quick questions. Most States rely on highways and bridges to connect communities. Most of coastal Alaska, particularly the southeast part of our State, depends on our marine highway.

Do you agree that ferry systems should be treated as a core component of our national transportation network? Certainly in my State it is. And will you commit to ensuring that programs like the Federal Highway Administration Ferry Boat Program remain a priority within your agency, so States like Alaska can continue to invest in critical ferry vessels and terminal

infrastructure?

Mr. McMaster. Yes, there is no one transportation solution that works for everyone equally. Transportation on ferry boats is a critical lifeline for certain communities that rely on this.

Senator Sullivan. Yes.

Mr. McMaster. We were pleased to make $175 million available last fall to 35 States. You have my commitment to continue to work with our State partners in support of the Ferry Boat Program. It is a critical lifeline for the communities that rely on this, especially in Alaska.

So we appreciate the importance and the need and look forward to continuing to work with you and the State of Alaska on this.

Senator Sullivan. Great. Good. Thank you very much on that.

Then finally, I just want to, I should have done this at the beginning, Administrator, I think you are doing a great job. And I think Secretary Duffy is doing a great job. I appreciate your focus on Alaska. I appreciate your responsiveness and his responsiveness.

We really look forward to working with you. That one contractor issue I mentioned to you, we want to try and nail that one down. I know you guys are working on that as well.

Hopefully we can finalize that when you are back in the State.

Keep up the good work. We might have an additional few questions here for the record. I want to thank you again for participating here. I want to thank my colleagues for their participation in today's hearing.

As I am closing as the Chair here, Senators who wish to submit written questions for the record have until 5:00 p.m. on Wednesday, June 17th to do so. And the witnesses, Administrator, respectfully, we ask you to get those questions back to the committee no later than 5:00 p.m. on Wednesday, July 1st. Hopefully you will have those done before then, because you are going to be in Alaska with me and seeing our great State.

With that, thank you again. The hearing is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 11:47 a.m., the hearing was adjourned.]