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Committee on Environment
and Public Works

Washington, D.C.

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CONSTRUCTING THE SURFACE TRANSPORTATION REAUTHORIZATION BILL: STAKEHOLDERS' PERSPECTIVES

Wednesday, July 16, 2025

United States Senate

Committee on Environment and Public Works

Washington, D.C.

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:00 a.m. in room 562, Dirksen Senate Office Building, the Honorable Shelley Moore Capito [chairman of the committee] presiding.

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

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

Senator Capito. Thank you for joining us this morning and welcome to our three great witnesses that we have.

This hearing is second in a two-part series of hearings that we are having to help guide the development of our next Surface Transportation Reauthorization Bill.

Earlier this spring, we held a hearing with U.S. Secretary of Transportation Sean Duffy, where he detailed how the Trump administration is administering the current law and described priorities for the next bill. Today, we will hear from new stakeholders on their priorities.

My vision for this legislation is simple, but important: we want to improve the movement of people and goods. Our roads and bridges are what connect us to the people and places that matter most in our lives. They help businesses, large and small, create jobs, economic activities, and enable their competitiveness in the global marketplace.

For example, my home State of West Virginia is pursuing important projects like Corridor H to better link our communities to essential services and economic opportunity. This legislation will provide the funding and establish the policies and programs that enable the improvement of the surface transportation network that we all rely on.

Since the enactment of the bipartisan Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, the Committee has reviewed and conducted oversight on existing programs and policies, and we have learned a lot about what is working and what isn't. The IIJA met a generational level of investment in our surface transportation network, but there have been some challenges in the implementation.

We know that the highway formula programs are producing results in communities across the States. We also know there have been some issues getting discretionary grant awards out the door and producing tangible improvements to that network.

When Secretary Duffy appeared before the Committee, he outlined the backlog of more than 3,200 discretionary grant awards without signed grant agreements that he had inherited from the prior administration. I appreciate the Secretary's ongoing efforts to address this backlog, and I know that the Department of Transportation is making progress on getting these agreements in place. As a matter of fact, I believe they have done over a thousand of those already, and have resolved those.

We will apply the lessons learned from the IIJA to shape the next bill and those lessons have led me to three principles. I have discussed these principles at our hearing with the Secretary, but I believe it is important to reiterate them today.

Principle one: improving the safety, and I want to emphasize safety, safety and reliability of America's surface transportation network with impactful investments. In recent years, we have seen an increase in the number and scope of Federal transportation programs. These programs sometimes have duplicative purposes and project eligibility. This leads to an expensive and time-intensive process to get funding out the door and lessens the impact that the legislation can make.

As we craft the next bill, we must prioritize investments that instead optimize Federal funding and give State partners the confidence to invest over a longer period of time. We should focus on eliminating duplicative programs and increasing funding for the highway formula programs that our States rely on and, as I said earlier, have a proven track record of success.

Principle two: reforming and modernizing Federal programs and policies to create efficiency. We all know that, as currently structured, Federal requirements can add red tape that increases costs and slows down the completion of projects. We all want to deliver transportation benefits faster and save money for the American taxpayer.

To achieve this goal, we need to take a serious look at Federal requirements to determine how we can create certainty for the partners who make these projects happen and ensure that the public receives the benefits of these investments quickly.

Principle three: addressing the variety of surface transportation needs across all States. Obviously, different States have different needs, and I think we will hear about that today. I wouldn't expect West Virginia, with our mountainous peaks and valleys, to which Senator Curtis is not here to tell me how much more mountainous his State is, so we will just say we are the Mountain State, to prioritize the same transportation projects as other States.

We need to avoid top-down mandates from Washington, D.C. and give States the flexibility to address the individual improvements that their communities need. It will take collaboration from my Senate colleagues, the Trump administration, and our stakeholders to complete this bill before the IIJA expires in September of 2026.

We must be pragmatic, work in a bipartisan fashion to deliver a bill that sets us up for a productive conversation on this reauthorization effort with our colleagues in the House.

I am really grateful, I know many of you have traveled far, to the witnesses that have joined us today. I look forward to learning about these priorities. This is an excellent opportunity ahead of us to make a pivotal impact on our surface transportation network. Each of us knows how important that network is and the role that it plays in keeping our Country's economy and people on the move.

I am excited to get to work and continue the EPW Committee's bipartisan tradition of developing legislation that delivers for the American people.

Ranking Member Whitehouse, I now recognize you for your 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. Thank you, Chairman, for this hearing. Thank you to the witnesses for being here. Welcome particularly to Mayor Gallego, who will be introduced later by her Arizona kinsman, Senator Kelly.

As we consider the next surface transportation reauthorization bill, I would be remiss not to remind everyone that Democrats will have no reason to do a bill if we have an administration that will not faithfully execute the laws, meaning both sides of any compromise we reach.

On the bright side, DOT has made substantial progress obligating money to hundreds of previously frozen grants. New draft guidance for the National Electric Vehicle Infrastructure program, NEVI, was submitted to the Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs. This is progress.

But NEVI is still stalled at OIRA, and periodic threats continue to politically disfavored projects, like high-speed rail and congestion pricing.

I want to get a bill done, and I have given my team the green light to work on details. DOT is moving in the right direction, particularly when compared to the dumpster fire of political corruption at the Environmental Protection Agency.

Here in Congress, there is bipartisan agreement about a

strong Federal commitment to our infrastructure. But the American Society of Civil Engineers still gives our roads a D+. We have more than 43,000 bridges still classified as structurally deficient. Thirty-nine percent of our public roads are still in poor or mediocre condition. Close to 40,000 people still die each year on our roadways, in the wealthiest country in the world.

Our directive is clear: work together to build on the early successes of the IIJA and further improve our transportation infrastructure. As we do this, prudent investments must account for anticipated conditions.

Annual costs for climate-related damage to road and rail infrastructure are expected to reach nearly $20 billion a year by 2050 with approximately $1.5 billion in costs for bridges alone. A recent report by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and Allstate found that for every $1 invested in infrastructure resilience, communities across the Country save $13 in post-disaster losses. One to thirteen is smart spending.

I thank DOT for finalizing the PROTECT grant agreement for the historic and beautiful Mount Hope Bridge in Rhode Island just last week. That PROTECT program recognizes that climate change is a real driver of infrastructure risk, and that investments in resilience now save big money in the long run.

Pollution-driven climate change is costing lives and

livelihoods. To pretend otherwise is to abdicate our moral and fiscal responsibility. The next reauthorization bill must and will take climate change seriously. We may not have to say it, but we have to do it.

Transportation is the largest source of U.S. greenhouse gas emissions: 1.8 billion metric tons of carbon dioxide into our atmosphere each year, more than a quarter of total U.S. emissions.

Just last week, four communities were ravaged by 1-in-1,000-year rainstorms. Climate change is making floods like those in Texas, North Carolina, New Mexico, and Illinois more intense, more deadly, and more frequent.

Homeowners' insurance in coastal wildfire risk areas is collapsing, taking down real estate values and presenting a systemic financial danger to our economy. Our transportation system is driving this climate upheaval, and that, in turn, challenges the functionality of our transportation system.

In addition to climate safety, the next reauthorization bill must prioritize roadway safety. The persistently high number of traffic fatalities, and their immeasurable pain and suffering, is unacceptable. This is not just driver and passenger safety, but the safety of those walking, biking, and working on construction sites or responding to emergencies. Many of our roads that are in poor condition are the local roads

that carry a large share of our vehicle miles traveled, exacerbating the safety risks.

As we put pen to paper on this next transportation package, let us be clear-eyed. Let us follow the evidence. Let us make the investments in our transportation systems that reduce emissions, that prioritize safety, that bolster resilience, and that meet the real-life needs of the communities we serve.

With that, I look forward to working together with the Chair and my Republican colleagues on this bill, and I look forward to hearing the perspectives of our witnesses.

[The prepared statement of Senator Whitehouse follows:]

Senator Capito. Thank you.

So next, I will turn to Senator Cramer to introduce our first witness for this meeting. Senator Cramer, you are now recognized.

Senator Cramer. Thank you, Chairman Capito and Ranking Member Whitehouse.

Chairman, let me just start out by promising you that unlike Senator Curtis, Governor Armstrong and I have no intention of bragging about how much bigger our mountains are than yours.

[Laughter.]

Senator Capito. Good.

Senator Cramer. We will just yield to that.

So it is a really great honor for me to represent my governor and a former member of Congress, Kelly Armstrong, whose actual years of service are very similar to mine in that every time he won an election, he improved the institution he went to. Because he replaced me in the House of Representatives.

[Laughter.]

Senator Cramer. Including on the Energy and Commerce Committee, and he also served on the Judiciary Committee, which as you know, Madam Chairman, is not a small task in the House of Representatives, to be on Energy and Commerce and have another such important office.

But Kelly -- what is interesting to me about Governor Armstrong is he is not naturally a politician at all. In fact, he is quite naturally the opposite. He is a successful businessperson, he is a lawyer that is not even ashamed to say it. He is a graduate of the University of North Dakota, where he got both his degrees, his undergraduate and his law degree. He served on the State Senate, which is, in my mind, where the rubber meets the road. And then of course, like I said, in Congress, and now as our governor.

Kelly, to me it seems like you are still a new governor. I don't know how it feels to you, having been through one legislative session. You may feel much more experienced. But Governor Armstrong brings that perspective, as I look forward to hearing from the Mayor.

I think for all of us up here, it is really, really important to remember that there is probably no better illustration of the juxtaposition of the relationship between the Federal Government, local and State governments than infrastructure. It is actually legitimate in the Constitution, right, interstate commerce.

And so Kelly brings that very important perspective from a rural State that produces a lot of things that we don't consume in our own State, or at least we don't consume nearly in the supply that we provide to a hungry world and a growing economy,

whether it is energy or food or how you get semolina wheat to the mill to turn it into flour, or durum wheat to turn into semolina flour to get it to a pasta plant to get it to the restaurant in New York. He understands it all, and he understands the relationship. I am really grateful he is here.

But beyond all those other things that Kelly has done, he is most of all, and what he is really, really good at is, he is a very experienced youth baseball coach. And that is really where the rubber meets the road.

So with that, Madam Chair, it is just my honor to introduce Governor Kelly Armstrong.

Senator Capito. Thank you, Senator Cramer.

I would mention that Governor Armstrong is testifying here on behalf of the National Governors Association this morning. And I will say to all of you out there, today is the Congressional women's softball game. We are playing at Audi Stadium tonight at 7:30. It is going to be televised.

I am the only Senator playing, so we had better get through that vote-a-rama quickly so I can get there. But this is how I met Governor Armstrong; he helped coach and coached us all, I think over on the third base line for one of our games. So it is really great to see you, and I welcome your testimony, Governor.

STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE KELLY ARMSTRONG, GOVERNOR, STATE OF NORTH DAKOTA

Governor Armstrong. Thank you, Chairman Capito, Ranking Member Whitehouse, and Senator Cramer, for that introduction, and members of the committee.

Before I get into my remarks, I would say if we are going to talk that much about baseball and softball, anybody who thinks being a State senator or being a trial lawyer is the best preparation for Congress is wrong. The best preparation for Congress is dealing with youth sports parents.

[Laughter.]

Governor Armstrong. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today and offer the State perspective as this committee continues its work on surface transportation reauthorization. I have the honor of serving as the 34th governor of the State of North Dakota.

In rural States like ours, transportation infrastructure isn't merely about convenience; it is a pillar of our communities and thriving local economies. Our highways, roads and bridges are essential lifelines connecting our agricultural producers, energy industry, small businesses and families to markets, healthcare, education and emergency services.

North Dakotans drive over 12,000 miles a year, and we are the geographic center of North America. As Senator Cramer

mentioned in his introduction, we produce a lot of things the world needs. We are very proud of the fact that we provide calories and energy to a world that continues to ask for more and more and more of those, to continue what is the greatest economy in the history of the world.

We put a lot of miles on. Unlike D.C., where many people don't own a car and rely on public transit, our citizens depend heavily on personal vehicles to reach their destination. We have teenagers driving farm trucks, senior citizens driving hundreds of miles for doctor's appointments and students driving 20 miles one way for baseball or basketball practice.

The roads in our State are not just for North Dakotans. Investment in rural highways benefits the entire Nation. The movement of people and goods from the coasts across North Dakota and other rural States benefits people and businesses at both ends.

Good roads in States like ours are essential to getting ag, energy and other products to national and world markets. My request for the Committee today is simple: continue providing robust funding, giving maximum flexibility to States and watch us go to work.

A key piece of ensuring States can successfully and efficiently build projects is formula-based funding. The next highway bill should maintain or increase the percentage of

program dollars distributed by formula, allowing States to more quickly deliver critical transportation projects. This is especially important in States like North Dakota that don't have that long of a construction season.

Although discretionary grant programs play a role in our infrastructure funding, the process is often inefficient, slow and costly. In some cases, it can take up to 18 months between an award and grant announcement.

I can give you a specific example. In June 2023, the North Dakota Department of Transportation was awarded a $30 million Railroad Crossing Elimination grant from the Federal Railroad Administration. The grant will fund a long-overdue grade separation project in Grand Forks, a city with nearly 60,000 residents and home to my alma mater, the University of North Dakota.

Secretary Buttigieg came to Grand Forks, we welcomed him, and we were excited about the project. As of today, more than two years later, the North Dakota DOT is still awaiting execution of a grant. And in our first legislative session, we had to appropriate $20 million in State DOT money because of the cost increase that is associated with that two-year delay.

We are very, very appreciative of the money. We are very, very appreciative of the award. But the delay alone is an expense that was never anticipated, never dealt with. And we

will fix it. We will get it done. We are excited about it. It is important. But it was unnecessary.

Delays in discretionary grant programs are problematic, regardless of their geographic location. However, in a State with a short construction window, the negative impacts of these delays are magnified.

While discretionary grant programs serve an important purpose, I encourage this committee to increase, to the extent possible, the percentage of dollars delivered via formula.

Additionally, I ask that you consider including provisions that give States more flexibility to deploy funds to the places they need it most. The bipartisan Highway Funding Transferability Improvement Act from Senators Cramer and Alsobrooks will do just that by increasing the percentage of funds departments of transportation can transfer between accounts.

States know their needs, and this legislation will enhance our ability to make the best decisions for our unique situations. Robust funding is important, but all the money in the world, and quite frankly, we could appropriate less money if we streamline the permitting process. We would take less money from the Federal Government every single day if we could get a shovel in the ground faster.

And so I appreciate the opportunity to be here, and just

would end with, thank you so much for having us. Thank you for all you have done to help us build infrastructure in North Dakota, and I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Governor Armstrong follows:]

Senator Capito. Thank you, and I am sure your voice is loud and clear for all the other 49 governors and others.

Our next witness is Austin Ramirez, the CEO of Husco International, Inc. He is testifying on behalf of the National Association of Manufacturers today. Mr. Ramirez became CEO of Husco in 2011, taking over from his father, Gus Ramierz.

Today Husco has over $500 million in annual sales, employs over 1,500 people worldwide and has a global footprint. They specialize in high performance hydraulic and electromechanical components. Mr. Ramirez will share his perspective as a user of the transportation network that relies on safe roads and bridges to get people to work and products to market.

I would note in his bio he was an all-American swimmer at the University of Virginia. Wahoowa for you.

Mr. Ramierz, you are recognized for five minutes.

STATEMENT OF AUSTIN RAMIREZ, CEO, HUSCO INTERNATIONAL, INC.

Mr. Ramirez. Thank you, Chairman Capito, for the generous introduction. And good morning, Ranking Member Whitehouse, and members of the committee.

My name is Austin Ramirez, and I am proud to serve as the President and CEO of Husco. Thank you for the opportunity to testify about the importance of modern infrastructure to U.S. manufacturing, and to provide manufacturers' views on surface transportation reauthorization.

Husco is a family-owned business based in Waukesha, Wisconsin. We make vital components used in the cars you drive and the equipment that powers construction. For nearly 80 years, we have been an economic driver in our local community, providing thousands of family-supporting careers.

We are also a business with a purpose, guided by the values of opportunity and service. Husco is the top corporate philanthropic donor in Wisconsin. We have built schools and welcomed refugees. These values reflect my family's story.

My dad, Gus, was born in Puerto Rico. He came to this Country at the age of six and pursued the American dream, graduating from our Nation's top universities. Over several decades, Gus went from working at Husco to leading it as a standalone company. Under our family's leadership, revenues have grown from $20 million in 1985 to over $500 million today.

Husco is an American success story. We represent the possibility and prosperity created by a strong manufacturing sector, an industry that employes 13 million people, and contributes $2.9 trillion to the U.S. economy. When manufacturing wins, America wins.

But our competitiveness depends on decisions made here in Washington. We need policy makers to promote a comprehensive strategy to grow U.S. manufacturing. Such a strategy must include continuing investments in our Nation's surface transportation infrastructure.

Modern, dependable transportation helps manufacturers make and move our products. These projects generate productivity gains and induce demand for manufactured goods, stimulating the economy and bolstering American competitiveness.

At Husco, we see these benefits directly. Our customers are in the automotive and construction industries. Husco families drive over the roads and bridges improved by highway projects. Several are turning dirt this year in Waukesha County.

To realize these benefits, however, we need the Federal Government to be efficient and remove red tape. Permitting reform must be part of any comprehensive manufacturing strategy.

Congress should seize the opportunity to support manufacturers like Husco through continued infrastructure

investment. We cannot go back to the fits and starts of highway bill extensions. Our industry needs certainty to invest, plan, and hire in America.

Manufacturers are ready to do our part to get a bill done this Congress. We champion the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, a historic effort made possible by the leadership of this committee. And we commend your leadership now as you look to drive the next highway bill to enactment.

As you begin this work, manufacturers respectfully encourage you to consider several policy proposals that will support our growth and success. First, we ask that you continue to make robust investments in our surface transportation infrastructure. Manufacturers recognize the importance of ensuring efficiency in government spending. We support long-term solutions for the Highway Trust Fund.

Second, Congress should strengthen supply chains. Manufacturers depend on the movement of freight, but industry surveys have shown repeated supply chain challenges. Surface transportation legislation should continue to expand highway capacity, connectivity and support our Nation's freight network through intermodal improvements.

Finally, Congress must make the reforms necessary to get these projects actually completed. The vast majority of manufacturers say that our complex permitting laws impact

investment decisions. We need to fix this broken system and stop endless litigation. Doing so will unlock growth potential across manufacturing and empower infrastructure investments that help companies like Husco compete.

As a small manufacturer in the heartland of America, I appreciate the committee's work to continue investments and support manufacturing. Manufacturers like Husco strongly support your efforts to advance bipartisan surface transportation reauthorization.

To put it simply, investments in infrastructure are investments in manufacturing. Our industry depends on a robust, modern, efficient transportation system, and you can promote domestic manufacturing by getting a highway bill done this Congress.

Thank you for inviting me to testify today to share Husco's story. I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Ramirez follows:]

Senator Capito. Thank you, Mr. Ramirez.

And now I want to turn to Senator Kelly who will introduce our final witness.

Senator Kelly. Thank you, Madam Chair. I am excited to welcome my friend and the Mayor of Phoenix, Kate Gallego, to the committee. Mayor Gallego is only the second woman to be elected the mayor of Phoenix, and she is one of the youngest big city mayors in the Country and certainly the best.

[Laughter.]

Senator Kelly. Now, Mayor Gallego has a wealth of transportation policy experience that I know will be critical to this committee's discussion today. During the Biden administration, she served as Chair of the Transforming Transportation Advisory Committee, and she continues to serve as chair of Climate Mayors, a bipartisan network of nearly 350 mayors across the Country who are leading cities to meet their sustainability goals.

And as a lead negotiator of the CHIPS and Science Act, I worked closely with Mayor Gallego to boost domestic semiconductor manufacturing in Arizona, and bring the Taiwan semiconductor manufacturing company to Phoenix. This critical investment is generating thousands of jobs and it is cementing our State as a global hub for microchip manufacturing. It is also part of the growth that is fueling the region that requires

smart investments in transportation infrastructure to keep up.

Mayor Gallego, thank you for testifying today. As the committee discusses the upcoming surface transportation reauthorization, I know how valuable it will be to learn from your experience about what Congress can do to meet the transportation needs of urban areas while ensuring that our infrastructure remains resilient in the face of climate change.

With that, Madam Chair, I hand it back to you.

Senator Capito. Thank you.

Welcome, Mayor, and we look forward to your testimony. Thank you.

STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE KATE GALLEGO, MAYOR, CITY OF PHOENIX, ARIZONA

Mayor Gallego. Thank you, Chair Capito, Ranking Member Whitehouse. Senator Kelly, thank you for the wonderful introduction and invitation. Members of the Senate, I am grateful for the invitation to testify today on surface transportation reauthorization.

I am honored to share my perspective and offer insight from local government. I have the great privilege of serving as mayor of the fifth largest city in the United States. More than 1.7 million people call Phoenix home. That is more than the population of 11 States.

We have a lot of people, and a lot of roads, nearly 5,000 miles. We own hundreds of bridges.

Throughout my time as mayor, and before that as a member of the City Council, improving our transportation infrastructure has been a top priority for me. I served as Chair of our MPO, the Maricopa Association of Governments, and helped lead our transit agency, Valley Metro.

I serve as Co-Chair of Accelerator for America, which operates the national infrastructure advocacy coalition, United for Infrastructure. Madam Chair, we were so grateful to you for kicking off our Infrastructure Week event this year.

I chaired the U.S. DOT Transforming Transportation Advisory

Committee, a national panel that advised on how to use technology to improve surface transportation. Our work included tools to speed project delivery as well as how to best use AI and automation.

I also serve as Chair of Climate Mayors, where I have the privilege of working with a bipartisan network of nearly 350 of my colleagues to work towards making our communities safer and more resilient. Recently, our coalition had the honor of speaking with Ranking Member Whitehouse. It was a perfect showcase of how direct collaboration benefits our levels of government.

That is why I am excited about the opportunity to speak with you today. The Infrastructure Investments and Jobs Act was revolutionary for our city. It is essential that the funding levels from that law continue, or better yet, increase, to allow States, tribes and local governments to carry on the essential work that the law spearheaded.

One thing I know is top of mind for all of us is safety. With an average of 30,000 crashes annually and an average of two crashes resulting in serious injuries every single day, NHTSA has consistently ranked Phoenix in the top three cities in the Nation for overall traffic fatalities. That is not a point of pride.

As a mayor, among the moments that stick with me the most

in this job are the tragedies that involve children. Both as a mom and a local leader, there is nothing worse than seeing a child get hurt. One moment I will always carry with me is speaking with a father of a young woman who was killed due to a traffic accident. He gave me a picture of her and asked me to work hard to make sure it never happens again. I still have her photo.

As a result of the Safe Streets and Roads for All program, we have been able to address some of the safety issues on the roads that took his daughter's life. This grant allowed us to implement proven safety measures designed to address issues involving pedestrians, transit riders, and drivers on a very critical corridor.

Another challenge that Phoenix faces is rising temperatures. Just last week, we hit 118 degrees. Our highway infrastructure is required to face this reality head-on and has to be built and maintained differently. It must be resilient. Programs such as PROTECT, and Senator Kelly's Healthy Streets Initiative, would help cities to implement essential initiatives such as cool pavement.

Infrastructure benefits our economy and our national security. When I was recruiting our largest economic development deal, a semiconductor manufacturer, to come to Phoenix, I spoke about our commitment to investing in

transportation infrastructure to support their investment. That mattered. TSMC is now investing $165 billion in our city, and the Federal Government has partnered with us to invest in freeway infrastructure to support these advanced industry jobs.

This partnership means that we, Americans, now make the most advanced chips in the world again in our Country, important for our national security.

In the upcoming surface transportation reauthorization bill, I encourage Congress to invest more directly to local governments, tribal governments and MPOs in addition to States. More than 75 percent of road miles are owned by cities and counties. In addition, local governments own and operate more than half of our bridges and the majority of our public transit systems. Local leaders drive the same roads as our constituents every day and we are well equipped to determine where to make key investments.

The discretionary programs in IIJA help cities, including mine, tremendously. Congress should continue to invest in those programs to meet the needs of communities today.

Phoenix is a growing city whose best days are still ahead of it. With continued help from Congress, who has so often been a key partner of cities, America's infrastructure will be safer, more resilient, better maintained, and more responsive to the needs of each community.

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

[The prepared statement of Mayor Gallego follows:]

Senator Capito. Thank you very much.

I will kick it off with a sort of general question to everybody on the panel. In your individual ways you have talked about the importance of the surface transportation network and what reauthorization will mean to you in terms of economic and job growth.

I want to dig down a little bit more on that. Is it the predictability, the affordability, the flexibility? What would you point to as, from your standpoint as Governor, and then we will go down the panel, to how this will impact your economic growth and job creation abilities?

Governor Armstrong. Thank you, Madam Chair. All of the above, but I think, I have I dthe opportunity to serve here too. We spend money inefficiently. And we are required to do that because you go a decade without any increase in funding and then things turn to whatever. The more predictability and foresight you can push onto us, the less money we will spend to build the same project.

Senator Capito. So would you say the predictability factor would be, get this bill in by the end of September of 2026, so you can have the predictability for the next five or six years?

Governor Armstrong. Yes, that would be a worthy call. Then I also think, I mean, like I said, our perspective, we start, each State is different, but I don't think any community

or any State in the Country has the amount of money they need to fix their roads and bridges or whatever. So they can prioritize their projects, they know which ones are permitted at the State or county level. They know which ones that they can divert, I mean, they can start doing, I mean, the workforce shortage exists all over the Country. So the earlier you could do that and the more flexibility you can, like with Senator Cramer's and Senator Alsobrooks' bill, then we can divert and move things around.

It is not just about like picking winners and losers. We know which project is ready to go, and we know which one we are going to have to wait another construction cycle to do.

Senator Capito. Right.

Mr. Ramirez, how would this impact your ability to grow?

Mr. Ramirez. I mentioned supply chain in my comments, and I think that is a real issue we have. Rural facilities, and having surface transportation to those facilities that is efficient and well-maintained is really important.

But another really big one is, my main facility is outside Milwaukee, Wisconsin. The main east-west corridor, I-94, has been caught up in litigation for years. So I have employees that spend hours a day stuck in traffic because we can't execute projects that we have already agreed to do.

Senator Capito. So that project is still waiting to be

completed? I am not unfamiliar with that.

Mr. Ramirez. Yes, ma'am.

Senator Capito. Wow. That is a major corridor for you.

Mayor, do you have a comment on how this will impact your ability to grow? You kind of alluded to it in your comments.

Mayor Gallego. Absolutely. I think we all share a goal for American infrastructure being the best in the world. This committee has moved that forward, but we have an enormous backlog. We appreciate the leadership on starting early. Certainty helps us. Same with the Governor, the earlier we can hire and plan, the less it costs, and the more we can do better.

Phoenix is proud to be one of the homes of the Mayo Clinic. In our case, they are in North Phoenix, in an area that has a lot of infrastructure challenge, including a major flood plain. There is a huge bridge, where if we could get that built it would expedite their ability to expand.

They have come up with incredible research that has reduced the risk of cancer, heart disease and more. The whole Country benefits from the innovation that is happening there. They need investments in infrastructure to be able to expand and do that work. It is literally life-saving.

So the work you are doing here today matters so much to us.

Senator Capito. Well, good. You led me right into my next question. This is one of my pet projects for surface

transportation as it was in the past, is our bridges. Our Nation's bridges, I could speak for my State personally, we have a lot of bridges, a small State but a lot of bridges. We have some that are considered, you can still use them, but in another five to ten years it is questionable whether you are going to be able to use them.

There is also, and they are so expensive to repair and fix, and inconvenient, as Mr. Ramirez was saying.

So, Governor, does having a set-aside for bridges help you, or would you rather have the flexibility to decide if you are going to use that for bridges or not?

Governor Armstrong. The State of North Dakota owns over 1,700 bridges. There are 4,800 bridges total in the State of North Dakota. So I would tell you that if you had a set-aside for bridges, no matter what the Federal Government gave us, it wouldn't be enough.

I would say we have to do a better job at our level. Again, we don't have mountains or all of that. But you wouldn't build a grid infrastructure for bridges in North Dakota in 2025 the same way you did it in 1925. So I think we can help make a better case to the Federal Government by saying, we are prioritizing these things, this is how we are going to do it.

But I wouldn't be opposed to the set-aside for bridges, because --

Senator Capito. Well, there is one. So, I think there has been one, and I'm very much committed to that.

I would also say, your point on whether you would rebuild in 2025 as you built in 1925 really leads me to my next Senator here, because that is the resiliency portion of the bill that I think it is exceedingly important. Not only does it save money, it saves lives, and it is much safer.

Senator Whitehouse?

Senator Whitehouse. Thank you, Chairman.

Welcome, Mayor Gallego. We appreciate your being here.

What are the particular challenges that 118 degree weather presents to your regional transportation system? Can you even wait for a bus in that kind of weather?

Mayor Gallegos. Our weather can be dangerous. We had 31 straight days above 110. Workplace safety really matters. I appreciate that you both emphasize how important that is. We hope surface transportation reauthorization will make sure that as construction contracts go forward, we honor the men and women who are building America. We have to make sure that they are structured so that safety is part of the areas we incentivize the most. Because construction in 118 can be dangerous.

Senator Whitehouse. Yes.

Mayor Gallegos. We don't want least cost bids that say you can't take breaks for water and shade, because those abilities

to cool yourself down matter so much to our community.

Similar to North Dakota, the way we build bridges today is not, the way we built in 1925 is not what we would do today. We didn't have the challenge of 31 straight days above 110. So we want the flexibility to use pavement and construction techniques that make sense for our climate, that can deal with the expanding and contracting.

We are so grateful that Congress appropriated money for bridges. Right now, how it is structured, that money goes primarily to the States. And as the Governor mentioned, they don't maintain every bridge. Phoenix maintains bridges directly, so we would love to be eligible for that money.

We have bridges that things are falling off of right now. And we want to be able to make sure that they are safe and that we keep our constituents ready. Again, we want to, at least in Phoenix, be able to use certain building materials that tend to be lighter in color, so they don't maintain the dark heat. When you wear a black tee-shirt, you get hot more easily than a white tee-shirt. Same principles with building materials; we just hit 97 as the overnight low. We used to cool off a lot more at night and building materials matter in that.

Senator Whitehouse. When I visited Phoenix some time ago, I met with the city's emergency management and law enforcement people, who pointed out that they were having staffing issues in

the heat because responding, for instance, to a regular car wreck could require a lot more people, because the heat effect on the first responders could be such that they need to be actually switched out on a pretty regular schedule, say, responding to a fire, for instance. And that you needed people who were there to help cool them down, so that the payroll load for the same task had gone up considerably because of the dangers of trying to work, particularly with protective gear on, in that kind of an environment.

Is that still the case?

Mayor Gallegos. That is still the challenge. For us, we now need to have mobile cooling units on site at fires, so that our firefighters can cycle in and out. Like West Virginia, we are home to beautiful mountains. Phoenix is proud to have the largest urban mountain park of any big city.

But when our firefighters go in and have to do multiple rescues in a day, it is dangerous. I have called firefighters who have been hospitalized after doing these rescues, because it is so hot and often they will have to carry the weight of human beings.

We try to pre-position ice throughout the city to cool people's bodies down. It is a real challenge and vulnerable populations are impacted the most by the heat.

Senator Whitehouse. Yes.

Mr. Ramirez, you mentioned in your testimony clean school buses, which is something dear to my heart, because in addition to everything else, the school buses have kids in them and they go around neighborhoods and they have fairly standard routes, so they are pretty easy to put a charging schedule on. And they don't spew particles and exhaust into neighborhoods as they go around and as they idle.

How would we best, in a highway bill, try to gather into our decisions some of those benefits that aren't kind of instantly in the program of, for instance, kids waiting for the school bus to pick them up, having clean air to breathe at the school bus stop instead of school bus exhaust to breathe?

Mr. Ramirez. It is a great comment. I think any time you do a major investment, you need to look holistically at all the positives and negatives associated with that. I will tell you, our business is making components for automotive applications, including things like school buses. And almost every new product that we manufacture has something to do with emissions and efficiency.

And that is true on the internal combustion engine side as well. If we can improve every internal combustion engine by 5 percent, that has a huge impact on the environment that our kids and our cities are dealing with, just as much as making electric vehicles go further for every charge.

Senator Whitehouse. Do you think a pollution tax or fee would be a sensible thing to look at to fund infrastructure improvements?

Mr. Ramirez. I don't know that I have a position on the right way to do it. I think considering environmental impact is certainly appropriate.

Senator Whitehouse. Thank you.

Senator Capito. Senator Cramer?

Senator Cramer. Thank you. Thank you all. This has been very, very interesting.

And you have done a great job, by the way, of answering my first two questions. So I won't repeat them, although I will say, my first two questions would have been about formula funding and the importance of that, and the flexibility within the formula to do the things that are important in a city or a State. I appreciate all of that.

What we haven't talked about yet, though, is adequate funding. Where do we get this revenue from? It is interesting, because as you all know, we are, the pay-to-use system is what our highway system is built on, except it is completely dependent on people who pay gas tax, largely. Yet not all vehicles utilize gas or at least, and even the ones that do, utilize less of it, or use less of it.

And yet this becomes such a major political struggle, not

among us so much as out there. It is so misunderstood oftentimes.

So I would like each of you to perhaps, particularly the Governor and Mayor, to talk about any ideas you might have for how we approach, whether it is electric vehicles, even hybrids, and having some sort of a way for them to pay to use this system in a way that is not offensive to everybody. Now I am asking for political counsel, quite honestly, so I will start with the Governor.

Governor Armstrong. I think that you kind of hit it, to start with, the gas tax part of it. I mean, we had a bill in the legislature to raise the gas tax that didn't pass. We run into use, I mean, if you are going to raise any tax, a use tax is significantly more.

I always get a little concerned about vehicle miles driven. I have written 500 briefs on the Fourth Amendment throughout the course of my life. And I don't know exactly, but everyone in North Dakota drives a lot. I think Wyoming is number one, but we are in the top 10. So you would negatively impact States like mine.

But I think a real conversation about, well, I will back up. I think if you can deploy the money faster and allow us to do things faster, that is what I think is the easiest version for adequate funding, because we don't need as much. And if we

have more flexibility and we can do it quicker, we can do that.

But I think it is a real conversation. I mean, every car, combustion or otherwise, is driving a lot more on that 18.3 cents that is being taken in. As you get more and more other vehicles on the road, there is going to be a disparity there.

Senator Cramer. Didn't North Dakota, I know most States have a registration fee of some sort, now, that is applicable to all vehicles. Is that at least a way to get to it?

Governor Armstrong. Yes, I think at the State level, I think that is appropriate. I think whatever four-tired vehicle that ends up on the road is going to utilize that road and is going to require maintenance and upkeep and all of those things.

And you can incentivize, I mean, there are a lot of political reasons that different people incentivize things. We are just talking about school buses. I hope they exempt places that have a shortage of school bus drivers, so we actually have schools getting out early and running schools and they are driving 200, 300, 400 miles a day in that single school bus.

Senator Cramer. Yes.

Mayor, maybe you could address the same thing. It seems to me that with this large dependence on Federal funding, it just doesn't seem right to me that certain categories of vehicles aren't paying what I would consider to be their fair share for the cost of building and maintaining these roads.

Do you have a thought or a solution on that?

Mayor Gallegos. It is important to me that we adequately fund the National Highway Trust Fund. Phoenix is a proud member of the National League of Cities, and the League has produced seven principles around this item. We would like to make sure it is adequate funding. We want to protect privacy. Any new solution, we think technology needs to be ready to go on day one. This is so essential: we have to get it right.

I share those principles in my written testimony. But I think they are a good guide for how we can improve in this area.

Senator Cramer. Thank you.

In the area of permitting, or maybe just reform in general, and you have all spoken to the efficiency issues, do any of you have just some solid closing recommendations for ensuring that infrastructure projects do move faster, get permitted and move faster, while also maintaining a high level of environmental protection? I will start with you, Mr. Ramirez.

Mr. Ramirez. Thank you, Senator Cramer.

This is a really complicated topic, but I actually think the solutions are pretty simple. We need deadlines in the regulatory process that are enforceable. And we need limited expedited judicial review. I think if we do those two things, we will actually get infrastructure dollars from being approved and allocated to actually being spent and invested in new

projects.

Senator Cramer. Counselor, would you support expedited judicial review?

Governor Armstrong. I would. [Remarks off microphone] permitting process at the Federal level. I think you all have a unique opportunity, because a lot of the fights that are associated with infrastructure reform don't apply to roads. But try getting a bridge permit across a Federal waterway. And we are not building new ones. We are replacing existing ones.

But every one of our constituents wants this kind of infrastructure, and you don't get into some of the ideological fights that exist in transmission or pipelines or some of those things.

Senator Cramer. Thank you all.

Senator Capito. Senator Padilla?

Senator Padilla. Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you to all three of you.

Mayor Gallego, good to see you again. I want to recognize that Phoenix recently hosted yet another Super Bowl which didn't just put the city of Phoenix in a national and international spotlight, but places significant demands on the city's infrastructure.

I am asking this question because in the next three years, California will host a couple of Super Bowls as well as the

World Cup and the 2028 Summer Olympics. Based on your experience, what can the Federal Government do to better support cities as they prepare for the transportation challenges of hosting large major events?

Mayor Gallegos. Our Super Bowl was successful because of a partnership with the Federal Government. We were able to use the New Starts program to expand our transit system. Often with these major sporting events, everyone stays until the last minute. And that means that they are all leaving at once. The transit system was very important for moving people.

We were able to, in partnership with the Federal Government, expand the tarmac at Phoenix Sky Harbor Airport. We had much more traffic when we were hosting that major event.

I do want to note, though, people with private planes apparently left at a high rate right after the Super Bowl halftime show, which was not obvious to me what happened. New buses were really important to us because we had to dramatically expand our fleet.

I should note in past Olympics, Phoenix has helped other cities that are host communities by lending buses, and I think all working together, we can help make sure it is a great experience. Our Country is in the international spotlight, and it is in all of our best interests to make sure that works well.

Not this committee's jurisdiction, but the safety dollars

you all sent are very important. Unfortunately, we are in a world where pretty much every city is investing in things like vehicle barriers, trying to learn from what happened in communities like New Orleans, and that done in partnership with the Federal Government.

Senator Padilla. Those are the big two, security and transportation.

Back to the Super Bowl experience again, are there any specific investments or flexibilities that could have been additionally helpful for the city that we should consider as we are crafting the next bill?

Mayor Gallegos. I think we would, again, because we often build our systems for the average transportation users, and these events cause such a huge spike, we would love that the Federal Government understand the huge variety and look at funding for peak levels. Because you will hit an all-time peak in every mode of transportation in southern California, and we ought to consider that in our planning. That is a way we might need to modernize.

It is important to us that security dollars and transportation dollars go hand in hand. Our transportation system does have some vulnerabilities, and so we need to plan ahead. We saw during the Paris Olympics one of the most dangerous safety threats was to their train system. So we ought

to learn from that, and plan ahead.

Senator Padilla. I was there when that happened.

Thank you for that. I may have some follow-up questions, both on that topic as well as the heat stress, heat island effects and some of the initiatives that you are pioneering, that came up earlier in the hearing. I want to associate myself with that as a concern and as a need.

Mayor Gallego. Thank you for your leadership on that topic. It will save lives.

Senator Padilla. Colleagues, I will call your attention to the map of current fires out west. So we have a lot of work cut out for us.

But in my time remaining, I do want to ask a question of Mr. Ramirez on a different topic. The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law provided $2.25 billion for the Port Infrastructure Development Program to strengthen our Nation's ports and freight systems. We know that these investments are part of a broader effort to expand capacity and keep goods moving more efficiently and reliably across the Country.

You mentioned in your testimony that supply chain issues are a primary business challenge for nearly a third of manufacturers. Can you talk about the need for continuing investment in port infrastructure in our efforts to keep goods moving efficiently?

Mr. Ramirez. Thank you for the question, Senator Padilla. Absolutely. Husco is a global company. We have facilities around the world; we have suppliers around the world. We both import a lot of components from the rest of the world into our U.S. facilities, and we export products that we make in our U.S. facilities around the world.

So certainly, ports are an absolutely critical part of the supply chain infrastructure that we have to deal with. It has been an issue with congestion over the years.

Senator Padilla. Any suggestions as to, not just to maintain, changes, additions to the port components of transportation legislation?

Mr. Ramirez. I think continued investment in technology and how we load and unload containers can make a huge difference in throughput for our ports.

Senator Padilla. Modernization and new fuel sources like hydrogen.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

Senator Capito. Thank you. Senator Husted?

Senator Husted. Thank you, Chairwoman Capito. Thank you to all of you for being here today.

I represent the State of Ohio. We call ourselves the heart of it all, because we make everything, right? We have agriculture, we have manufacturing, we have a lot of things.

I will brag for a moment that in the recent CNBC ratings of best States to do business, we were number five, and we have got number one rated in infrastructure. I have been involved in those issues over the years. One of the things, the reason that we were rated number one is because we have invested the money. We have actually asked people to sacrifice by paying a little bit more so that we could have quality infrastructure to make roads safer, to make sure that the infrastructure serves our manufacturing capacity. And those things matter a lot.

And different States take different approaches. Some States have very hot weather that affects their roads and some have freezing and thawing, we know salt, all of those things on the roads really impacts the things that we do. I just am interested in advice from each of your perspectives as we think about our highway infrastructure and what we are doing for our roads and bridges, and new technologies and adoptions.

What advice do you have for us as we consider how to fund those things and regulate those things going forward? I will start with you, Governor Armstrong.

Governor Armstrong. My advice to my colleagues when I was here and what will always be as a Governor who deals with this, set metrics and let us get there. Set reasonable, realistic metrics. Don't prescribe how we meet those metrics.

And that exists in everything, but particularly in these

things. Because the way they do it in Arizona and the way we do it in North Dakota is going to be different. We have bridge needs; they have bridge needs. We don't have 118 degree heat; we have 60 below wind chill. And we have a lot of different issues.

So I appreciate when we start talking about resilience and we talk about all of these things. But the hair on the back of my neck goes up, because I think it is just going to make it slower and slower and slower.

If you can set metrics that are reasonably attainable and don't slow down the process, we will meet them. We know how to do it. Our construction guys, our State guys, they want to do it. We don't want to rebuild it. We don't want to have to fix it any more than we have to.

So that would be my request.

Senator Husted. Thank you, Senator.

We talked about the philosophy of the users of infrastructure paying for infrastructure and having consistent funding. I think that is really important. But I think even when you have that, if we can't go from allocating dollars to actually getting projects done, I don't think anything is more frustrating than that, than hearing about infrastructure spending but actually not seeing projects get completed.

So to me it comes back to permitting and regulatory reforms

so we can shorten the time between allocating dollars and getting a project actually completed.

Senator Husted. Yes, time is money, inflationary costs, things happen. You thought you had enough money.

I know our highway funding in Ohio; we thought we had enough money when we passed the last gas tax. But then the whole inflationary thing happened over the course of time. Now that money is not adequate to the task. So the longer it takes, the less value your money has.

Mayor Gallego. We all know that we have the most innovative country when it comes to transportation. The discretionary grants have been so helpful in pushing that innovation and getting that technology deployed.

I spoke earlier about how we have a backlog of maintenance on our bridges. For us, we are always going to put dollars to safety first. We have to make sure our roadways are safe.

But because of some of the discretionary grants we have been able to receive, we are looking at technologies that do things like speed freight traffic. And that is good news for America, when manufacturers can get their goods where they are going more quickly.

That is dollars in their pockets, that is American jobs, and just the incredible innovation that comes out of these discretionary grants will put our Country in a great place to

continue to lead the way.

Senator Husted. I am going to run out of time here, but the idea of, again, I will come back to, I like the idea of setting the metrics. It is a solid approach to doing this, and everything we can do to save you time would be helpful.

Any other thoughts, Governor?

Governor Armstrong. Yes. I would reiterate what Mr. Ramirez said. None of this works without streamlining permitting. And I think roads are the perfect example. You don't have to stop linear infrastructure everywhere; you only have to stop it in one spot. If there is a road from Ohio to North Dakota, they can stop it anywhere. They can stop it in Minnesota, they can stop it in North Dakota, they can stop it in Ohio, they can stop it in Indiana.

Senator Husted. Thank you.

Senator Capito. Senator Blunt Rochester?

Senator Blunt Rochester. Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you to the Ranking Member. And thank you to all of the panelists. It is good to see my former E&C colleague as well.

I have heard from folks up and down my State about their priorities for the next surface transportation reauthorization bill. Your perspectives and this hearing is really very helpful as we craft it.

My colleagues have heard me mention the Reconnecting

Communities program before. And this program addresses physical barriers and connects people to jobs, essential services and economic opportunities, while correcting historic injustices and harms to communities due to past infrastructure decisions.

So our goal is to make the best decisions for all of us. I was grateful to get this program into the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law during my time in the House.

Mayor Gallego, the city of Phoenix received one of the last rounds of RCP planning awards. Can you tell us a little bit about the Grand Canalscape project and why this funding is so essential?

Mayor Gallego. Thank you. Phoenix is grateful for your leadership on this project. It makes so much sense for us.

It may be a surprise to some people; Phoenix has more miles of canals than Venice. The canal system was really important for delivering water infrastructure to farms in Phoenix's early days, but it has now become a really important transportation corridor.

Unfortunately, there are some major conflicts now with rail. There is not currently a safe way to cross the rail at one part of the Grand Canal. It also has a real challenge with the freeway.

Unfortunately, when you don't give people a safe way to cross, they still cross. So the Reconnecting Communities Grant

really helps us to make sure that we can do that in a way that keeps our residents safe. When you have a major crash including fatalities along the rail, it shuts down the rail system.

So we are so grateful to have that support. These projects are enormously complicated and we couldn't deliver them without Federal partnership.

Senator Blunt Rochester. Could you talk a little bit about what will happen if we fail to reauthorize the Reconnecting Communities program? Would the city of Phoenix be able to deliver on this project?

Mayor Gallego. Unfortunately, this project is enormously complex and we really need the Federal partnership. I should take the time to say thank you, because these investments allow us to save lives. I get to meet the people who live along the way and who don't have to worry about their kids running across a rail anymore. I don't know that you always get to.

So on their behalf, thank you.

Senator Blunt Rochester. Thank you for sharing that. I think the reality is there are members on both sides of the dais who have multiple projects that will benefit, including in my home State, at the top of our State in Wilmington, all the way down to our rural counties in Georgetown, Delaware. So it is vitally important and we want to continue this.

So I will be introducing legislation to get this done. I

urge my colleagues to join me in expanding the Reconnecting Communities program in the next surface transportation bill.

I would like to shift gears a little bit to digital infrastructure. Mayor, you also spoke a little bit about encouraging smart technology and AI. I would love to ask you and the Governor, how could increased investment in digital infrastructure, things like radar-based detection systems at intersections, to live travel advisories, contribute to safety and mobility on our roads alongside traditional physical infrastructure?

Governor Armstrong. Piggybacking a little bit off of what the Mayor said on safety, our legislature passed a bill that raised our speed limit, raised our fines. But that is probably not the safest part of the bill. We are now doing digital speed limits and requirements when we have the adverse weather, which is snow and blizzards and icy roads. We can do that in real time now.

I think if you are talking about mileage and cost, we are looking at running our entire State fleet through an AI program to see how we buy cars, where we park cars, are we driving them too much, are we not driving them enough. So I think there is real opportunities to do a lot of these things.

Then I think, just from the way you model out infrastructure, knowing what your traffic flow is and knowing

where it is at. It doesn't matter if it is in a rural State like North Dakota or on the east coast, you can prioritize where you are spending this money and then spending it better.

Senator Blunt Rochester. Great. Thank you.

Mayor Gallegos. We have been lucky to have received Federal support for advance signals. Signal technology is so important to the city of Phoenix. We can give our firefighters signal priority so they can get where they are going more quickly. If you are experiencing a stroke, the amount of time while your brain does not receive blood is really important. Seconds matter. So giving our firefighters a little bit of an advantage matters so much.

We also have a real challenge with, unfortunately, pedestrian fatalities and red light running. There is technology today that we are going to be able to install, thanks to the Infrastructure and Jobs Act that can stop a signal if someone is in the intersection and save a life.

I had a very important boss who was killed in one of these accidents. And I hope my work as mayor of Phoenix will mean that fewer people have to go through that. But your investment in this technology helps us save lives.

Senator Blunt Rochester. Thank you, Madam Mayor. I will be pushing for digital infrastructure formula funding, and hopefully that will save more lives.

Thank you so much, and I yield back, Madam Chair.

Senator Capito. Thank you.

Senator Boozman?

Senator Boozman. Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you, Ranking Member, for holding this important hearing today.

Governor Armstrong, in Arkansas, 43 percent of our residents live in rural areas. We rank sixteenth for fatality rates on rural roads and third for rural pavements in poor condition. Some Federal programs like NEVI and PROTECT can make it harder for States to target those basic rural road needs.

From your perspective, how can Congress better structure funding programs to give States more flexibility to invest where it is most needed, especially for rural safety and road conditions?

Governor Armstrong. The one thing I have learned about all of this is that funds are fungible. So the more you were doing into these specialty programs, the less likelihood that places like rural Arkansas and rural North Dakota, it is not whether or not they qualify, they are not going to apply. I mean, we are just trying to get county roads built. We are not interested in the other side of it.

So I would say that the more flexibility that you give on a real basis for recognizing it is not always population based, it is economy based, it is economies of scale based. And then I

think one thing is recognizing that rural infrastructure is more expensive per mile than urban infrastructure in a lot of ways. And it is really hard to deliver whatever service it is to the last mile.

But oftentimes, that last mile is producing a ton of economic activity that the world needs. Farm equipment is getting heavier, grain trucks are getting bigger, economies of scale in that industry are going up. So making sure that we aren't, all of these things are worthy to debate and discuss, but not at the expense of the places that are producing the things and just don't have, like, we don't have barriers to connecting communities other than 100 miles.

Senator Boozman. Along the same line, Governor, you are well aware of the programs that bring delays and extra costs because of burdensome applications and uncertain timelines. However, some major projects like large rural highway upgrades or critical freight corridors are simply too expensive for States to tackle with formula funds alone, which you just alluded to. That is why large competitive grant programs are so valuable when used well.

What are your thoughts on the effectiveness of big grant programs and the need to cut red tape and make sure Federal dollars get turned into projects on the ground faster?

Governor Armstrong. We appreciate the grant programs as

much as we can get them, yes. The quicker you can deploy the money, I mean, I don't know if you will find a rural governor that wouldn't like block grants in every area of this versus the requirement side of it. But not at the expense of formula funding.

And the more flexibility we are given in that is better. The grant, we have utilized the grant programs. We care about ports, too, in North Dakota. We care about them a lot. Our products get there, and we need them to get there.

But at the same time, we want to be able to have a more reasonable and reliable cost analysis for the next construction season, so we can better spend the dollars you send to us.

Senator Boozman. Very good.

Mr. Ramirez, you know first-hand that strong infrastructure is critical to manufacturing competitiveness. Rural areas produce a significant share of our Nation's manufacturing and farming output. Yet population decline and shrinking tax bases make it harder to modernize roads and bridges.

What Federal investments or policy reforms would best help manufacturers in rural States remain efficient and connected to national and global markets?

Mr. Ramirez. Thank you, Senator. Great question. It is true, most things don't get made in big cities. We manufacture in rural environments. And that is certainly true for Husco and

I think most manufacturers across our Country.

I feel a little bit like a broken record, but I really think the key is around permitting reform, and not just getting dollars allocated, but getting projects completed.

Senator Boozman. Very good. Thank you, Madam Chair.

Senator Capito. Thank you.

Senator Sullivan?

Senator Sullivan. Thank you, Madam Chair. I want to welcome the witnesses, and you are going to see a theme, I think, here on this issue of permitting reform. This committee has a long and I think real positive history of producing significant bipartisan infrastructure. I am really hopeful that we can, under the Chairman and Ranking Member's leadership, do that again with this highway bill.

But they key has to be permitting reform. I think even my friends on the other side of the aisle, who, let's face it, oftentimes resist it because you have far left radical environmental groups who love the fact that NEPA takes 10 years, because you can't build anything. They do. That is a fact. I see it in my State all the time.

But Governor, let me start with you. My State, Alaska, is resource-rich, infrastructure-poor. We have less road miles than Connecticut and we are almost 120 times bigger than Connecticut and have a lot more natural resources than

Connecticut.

So how do we ensure that a highway bill for the whole Country takes into account places like my State or your State that have huge resource potential but not nearly the number of roads that we need, that the rest of the East Coast has? Eighty-two percent of the communities in Alaska are not even connected by a road.

So how do we make progress in that area?

Governor Armstrong. I think the first and most important answer is an equitable formula that gives States maximum flexibility on how to spend the money. Secondly, I think there are two ways infrastructure gets beat up, how heavy is it or how much is it driven on? Those are the two ways infrastructure gets beaten up.

You might not have as many miles driven or as many vehicles traveling on those roads. But the things you are doing in Alaska are pretty heavy, and they are pretty important. So recognizing that you factor those things in.

But eventually, I mean, I think the answer, the simple portion, the implementation is really hard, right? But the simple portion is making sure you have an equitable formula that gives States the maximum amount of flexibility and certainty.

Senator Sullivan. Right.

Mr. Ramirez, let me go to permitting reform. It is such an

important issue. The Supreme Court in its Seven County Infrastructure Coalition v. Eagle County was a great course correction on NEPA, saying look, this is a procedural, not a substantive law. You don't need 10,000 pages in 10 years.

We have a gold mine in Alaska, the Kensington Mine, is now employing about 450 people in southeast Alaska. It is producing gold for America. Took 20 years to permit. We had a big infrastructure development project on the Kenai Peninsula. It was a road that took 36 years to permit. I think it was a world record on NEPA slowness.

So I think even my colleagues on the other side of the aisle, who have always blocked permitting reform, that is the dark, deep secret here, you have my Democrat colleagues, hey, we want permitting reform, we want permitting reform, then you go to them with common sense approaches and they don't do it because their far left groups tell them not to.

But I think even my Democrat colleagues now want to see this, because they see everything, renewables, any project is blocked by this real bad implementation. NEPA had a good goal at the beginning, but it has been totally abused and hijacked by groups that don't want to build, certainly don't want to build in my State.

So what are the real key elements, by the way, we have some NEPA reform in the budget reconciliation, but I really want to

thank the Chairman for staying on that. It is pretty good, actually.

But what would you say are the key elements that I hope my Democrat colleagues can get behind on NEPA reform that everybody in the Country wants? Every Democrat governor, every Democrat mayor, I am sure the mayor here wants it. I mean, it is nuts that it takes 10 years on average to permit a bridge. No wonder why China is kicking our butt on so many of these things.

So what would you think are the key elements of NEPA permitting reform that we need for this bill?

Mr. Ramirez. Thank you, Senator. I would offer two principles that I think would solve the majority of the problems. One is going in up front, to have a regulatory process that has enforceable deadlines.

Senator Sullivan. Yes.

Mr. Ramirez. That can't go on forever.

Senator Sullivan. Both at the agency level and at the litigation, the court level.

Mr. Ramirez. That would be the second part. So I think going in and having deadlines for the regulatory agencies, and then having an expedited judicial review process so it can't be tied up in litigation forever. If you applied those two principles across our regulatory system, I think we could see a real change.

Senator Sullivan. Very common sense. I hope my colleagues on the other side of the aisle embrace those. Because they are common sense. The whole darned Country wants them.

And let's not let some far left groups who always hate NEPA reform drive the agenda for America. Nobody wants 10 years to permit a bridge, 20 years to permit a gold mine. And unfortunately, that is what NEPA has done to our Country.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

Senator Capito. Thank you.

Senator Kelly?

Senator Kelly. Thank you, Madam Chair.

Mayor Gallego, thank you again for being here. As you know better than probably anybody, Phoenix is an urban heat island experiencing higher temperatures than the surrounding rural areas due to the lack of vegetation and the use of asphalt and concrete that absorb a lot of the heat.

An estimated 45 percent of metro Phoenix residents live in an area where the urban heat island effect raises temperatures by about 8 degrees or more. This is why I worked to include the Healthy Streets program, which I think you mentioned in your opening remarks, and we put that in the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, which would fund initiatives such as cool pavement projects that mitigate the effects of this extreme heat.

So, Mayor, why is it critical for Congress to fund programs that help vulnerable cities like Phoenix become more resilient to the effects of extreme heat?

Mayor Gallego. Thank you for your leadership on that program. We are at a point now where we are going to have to adapt cities to hotter environments. Phoenix now talks to cities all around the Country, including in the northern-most parts of our Country, about heat challenges. This is a national problem, and we appreciate your coming up with a national solution.

The heat can be deadly. We are losing more Americans to heat than any other type of natural disaster. But our infrastructure funding hasn't caught up with that reality yet. Even some of the coldest States in the Country have had terrible heat waves with an incredible loss of life.

We know the solutions. There are building material changes, design changes, that can save lives. Your program will help cities, rural communities, tribes, get the funding to make those changes, many of which require us to design infrastructure very differently.

Senator Kelly. I had a roundtable back in Phoenix on extreme heat just last week. And the number of deaths nationwide from extreme heat exceeds every other natural disaster combined. It is a real problem, and it is also

associated with the thing we are going to talk about next here.

I want to talk a little bit about energy. It is our grid. The grid goes down in Phoenix, the estimates are that somewhere up to maybe half of the residents of the city will wind up in an emergency room, if it happens during a certain time of year in the summer when the heat is the highest.

So I want to talk about, mentioning electricity. Your data centers, chip manufacturing and other industrial expansion in Phoenix is putting pressure on our infrastructure. As our population grows to fuel this technology boom, how does electrical and transportation infrastructure need to respond?

And since this is transportation, maybe we should focus on that.

Mayor Gallego. We are seeing a huge boom in data center and advanced manufacturing. Just in the Phoenix metro, the data centers have requested 32 gigawatts of new electricity. The amount of damage, well, the impact this would have on our streets with all this construction, these are huge construction sites, in our case we have it in many cases right up against residential, so very high impact. You are seeing a lot of truck traffic; water is a different impact.

But the amount of infrastructure investment is something we really need to talk about. Data centers are very vulnerable to heat, so the cooling impact in a community --

Senator Kelly. And to put the 32 gigawatts into perspective, the current SRP and APS, the two utilities, provide about 16 for the entire county right now. So the requested, over a number of years, I think it is five to ten years, exceeds what is currently on the grid right now.

Mayor Gallego. It does. And this is a trend we are not talking about enough as a country; what does it mean if in a few short years we are asking our utilities to completely replicate themselves?

I am so grateful you are paying attention to the infrastructure side of that. Because the amount of traffic in areas that have not seen traffic, we should probably talk about hazardous materials on our streets. They will be going places they haven't, and it may be time to have new conversations about that.

The data centers, there is a conversation in Arizona and several other States about small modular reactors. So that would put nuclear material in areas that have not seen nuclear material before. Phoenix is the fifth largest city in the Country. Our transportation department needs your support to navigate that as do our firefighters and others who will need new types of training if we are going to see this change. We have to look at how it impacts our street network.

There might be some time where we would also be able to

reduce regulation, particularly around semiconductors. There is some hazardous material regulation that we might be able to update to be able to make it a little bit easier to do business.

But it really is time to look at the types of material that will be traveling on streets that have never seen it before, and how we have the appropriate regulatory system from the Federal Government for these issues.

Senator Kelly. Thank you, Mayor. Thank you for being here.

Senator Capito. Thank you.

Senator Ricketts?

Senator Ricketts. Thank you, Chairman Capito, and thank you for your dedication to providing a strong foundation for the next surface transportation reauthorization bill. Hearings like this are invaluable as we work to build legislation that will address key transportation infrastructure issues.

So thank you, Chairman Capito, and thank you, Ranking Member Whitehouse, for holding today's hearing. And thank you to the witnesses for coming here today.

Governor Armstrong, welcome to Washington. I have talked before this committee about needing flexibility in the next reauthorization. And I have been looking for some ways to be able to provide that flexibility through the infrastructure supply chain. You are from an agricultural State, as I am.

Agricultural products are a large part of the infrastructure advantage that we have, we have been able to provide that.

I know this is especially true in Nebraska, and one of the things that I found when I was governor was that oftentimes my department of transportation thought their customer was the road, not the people who drove on the road. We have $9.9 billion in agricultural exports every year. I am sure North Dakota has a lot of agricultural exports as well. Transporting these goods is vital for both of our States and the Country's economic growth.

That is why I recently introduced the VARIANCE Act with my colleague Senator Schiff. This would allow a 10 percent axle variance for vehicles transporting dry bulk goods. As you know, sometimes corn is going to shift around a little bit so you can't necessarily keep the corn and soybeans over every axle.

So it gives some flexibility, then increased efficiency and safety and cost-effectiveness as well. So this is one that I hope in many ways we can get the EPW committee to go forward on it.

Governor Armstrong, where have you and your DOT experienced regulatory roadblocks? How can Congress best address these things in the next reauthorization?

Governor Armstrong. I will deal with one we haven't talked about yet, which is rail. And the thing with rail is, we are

trying to get to our friends on the coast to get our products to port. And eventually, you run into bottlenecks. Sometimes it is a State line with different political ideologies, sometimes it is just a place in which you can't get it in the ground.

So we can build the front-end infrastructure. North Dakota has done a really great job of that. But eventually, we can only build our infrastructure out enough that it can get through Montana, Idaho, Washington, to the ports.

So I think understanding that the ability to do those things only works in North Dakota if it works all the way to where it is going. And the more you create that, and Senator Ricketts, you will understand this as well, I want as much competition in the marketplace for my egg producers as humanly possible.

And then another one, which isn't necessarily this, but we should hold our frenemies accountable for the amount of empty shipping containers that are floating around the world on a daily basis. I think that is one thing that is not always front of mind, but really, really affects the transportation side and the cost side of my egg producers getting things to market.

Senator Ricketts. Just on that issue, have you found that you have had trouble getting containers to North Dakota because of that? Or rail cars?

Governor Armstrong. Yes. Either trouble in supply, or

trouble in cost.

Senator Ricketts. Well, I thank you for that feedback on that. I know that working with Union Pacific, headquartered in Nebraska, I know that they have had issues with regard to transporting coal to get to export on the west coast ports, because of again, local-State regulations blocking that, which is, it is a legal product. You have, again, local-State rules that are blocking just the passthrough of that product to get to foreign markets.

Governor Armstrong. For all of the expansion of the Interstate Commerce Clause, there are some places where it is very hard. I don't have a port in North Dakota. I have to get my products to a port.

Senator Ricketts. Yes. Point well taken. Thank you, Governor.

Mr. Ramirez, you are president and CEO of a manufacturing company, and I am sure you have run into various issues as well. One of the problems we have had in Nebraska is a project can be all the way through the permitting process, including in the Endangered Species consultations, but if the status of the species changes during that process and before the final NEPA approval, then the whole thing has to start all over again.

You mentioned a couple of issues to Senator Sullivan with regard to kind of bigger picture things of making sure that we

have timelines, and to put limits on litigation. Are there are other specific things like what I just described that would be great reforms to be able to think about as we go through a permitting process type of thing?

Mr. Ramirez. I think the concept of categorical exclusions is another one that I probably should have brought up earlier. But for similar types of infrastructure having similar types of environmental reviews, again that just strikes me as a commonsense way to help expedite this process without giving up any of the robustness that our citizens expect.

Senator Ricketts. Great. Thank you very much, Mr. Ramirez.

Thank you, Chair.

Senator Capito. Senator Alsobrooks?

Senator Alsobrooks. Thank you so much to Chair Capito and Ranking Member Whitehouse for holding today's hearing and thank you as well to all of our witnesses for joining us.

Surface transportation is a vital part of everyday life, connecting people to jobs, education, and essential services. Decades of under-investment, however, have left much of our Country's infrastructure in poor condition, leading to traffic congestion and safety concerns.

The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law sought to address these issues by providing unprecedented investments to create a more

reliable, sustainable, and equitable transportation network while creating jobs for Maryland, which is my State. This meant dedicated funding targeting the repair of thousands of miles of deteriorating roads and hundreds of structurally deficit bridges.

This piece of legislation also provided over $1.7 billion for public transit, helping to modernize buses, trains and rail lines, and providing funding to programs that seek to improve transportation equity and safety.

As the Ranking Member of EPW's Subcommittee on Transportation and Infrastructure, and a member of the Banking Committee, I look forward to working with my colleagues here to ensure that the next authorization provides long-term predictable investments that repair our aging infrastructure, improve safety and support economic development.

My first question is for Governor Armstrong. Welcome, Governor. Many rural counties, including those in Maryland, face unique challenges when it comes to roadway safety, like long stretches of unlit roads, limited emergency response, and aging infrastructure. I wonder whether you believe the current Federal safety programs provide States with sufficient flexibility to effectively address these unique risks.

Governor Armstrong. I will like it better if yours and Senator Cramer's bill passes.

Senator Alsobrooks. Yes, exactly.

Governor Armstrong. I think it is important, and even through the course of this hearing, the different things that exist.

And I said this regarding bridges; we have to do a better job of building out safety corridors as well. But recognizing that delivering those services in rural areas is really, really difficult, and it is really difficult if there is four feet of snow on the ground and the wind is blowing 30 miles an hour.

So the more flexibility we are allowed, the better we can have. And one of the things that is unique to a place like North Dakota is, you have a bad winter and a late thaw, and all of a sudden I have a county problem or a DOT problem that nobody knew about until May 1st.

And if you are really restricted in how you utilize the money that is available to you, you are legitimately fixing things that would go 25 spots down the priority area because you are not allowed to use the money for the one that should be number one.

Senator Alsobrooks. I totally get it. I was a former county executive of my county, and understand so well exactly what you described.

Next, I have a question for Mayor Gallego. The Federal Highway Administration's PROTECT program is a critical new

funding source for States and cities working to strengthen the resilience of their infrastructure. Maryland has used this funding to assess and strengthen at-risk coastal infrastructure and evacuation routes.

I wonder, how is it that the city of Phoenix, if you can just talk to us a bit about how you have tackled the broader challenges of infrastructure resilience in the face of extreme heat, flooding, and other climate related risks?

Mayor Gallego. Thank you so much. We are thrilled to have someone who understands local government advocating for the PROTECT program. For us, we have hit record after record in terms of heat, and our infrastructure was not built with that in mind.

The PROTECT program, just as it helps you with sea level rise, helps us with infrastructure that may literally melt because of the heat. It allows us to invest in more advanced building materials that are more heat resilient and that also don't retain the heat as much.

We are going to need to redesign our network for a hotter environment. PROTECT gives us the chance to try innovation. I would very much like Phoenix to be the lead in developing the technologies for our transportation future around heat resilience, which I think will become important to more and more of the community. PROTECT allows us to be innovative, to take

risks and do things we haven't done before, as well as to deploy solutions we have proven work.

Senator Alsobrooks. Great. Next, I would like to go back to Governor Armstrong. The Federal Highway Administration's emergency relief program is a vital Federal tool for restoring damaged infrastructure and ensuring safety after disasters like the bridge collapse. As you know first-hand, Maryland had the Key Bridge collapse.

So I wonder whether North Dakota has benefited from this program, if you can just talk quickly about it.

Governor Armstrong. We utilize, I say this tongue in cheek, what other people call climate change, we usually call Tuesday. We can have 100 degree swings in October in the same town. So we have utilized it for, the last time I remember was actually the 2011 flood and when our capital city flooded.

And utilizing the fund to get, I mean, it is, the capital city in the State of North Dakota, we had bridges, we had highways, we had county roads that without the Federal Government's help we would not have been able to recover nearly as fast.

Senator Alsobrooks. Thank you so much. Thank you.

Senator Capito. Thank you.

Senator Markey, I will give you a second here. You are up.

Senator Markey. Thank you, Madam Chair.

Our debate about this surface transportation bill must begin with a question: what do Americans want out of their surface transportation system? I think it is fair to say they want it to be safe. They want it to be affordable. And they want a system that does not further exacerbate the climate crisis.

So let's evaluate how we are performing in these categories. On the topic of safety, our transportation system is a disaster; 40,000 people are dying every year on our roads. And this is no accident.

Many of our roads are designed only for fast moving cars, not for pedestrians, for cyclists or for public transit, all of which are safer modes of travel with the right infrastructure in place. So that is a failure.

Now let's examine transportation affordability. On this front too, we are failing. The Department of Transportation estimates the cost for average Americans $12,000 a year to own and operate one automobile. Twelve thousand a year.

Many communities are left without other viable transportation options, requiring a family to travel by way of car for almost every trip, increasing their costs. That is a failure.

And then of course, when it comes to sustainability, our system is performing poorly. The transportation sector is the

largest contributor to greenhouse gases in our Country.

We have a system that invests more money in expanding highways than it does in building sustainable infrastructure. That is a failure.

Our communities feel these failures every day in higher costs, worse air quality, a deteriorating climate, and the loss of loved ones in car crashes.

So Mayor Gallego, do you agree that local communities most directly feel the pain of our failing transportation system? I would just love to get your expert view on that issue.

Mayor Gallego. Thank you. We are faced with a climate crisis right now in Phoenix. We had a month straight above 110 last year; we hit 118 this month. Your constituents might put mittens on their children in the winter; we sometimes do it in the summer because a seat belt buckle can burn your hand.

So we need to make sure, 118 is hot enough, it is too hot, and we have to make sure that we address this. We have to design a transportation system that is resilient. We need the right building materials for our roads. We need to make sure our transit hubs have shade and are comfortable so that people can be safe while using them. So we really appreciate your leadership on this.

Senator Markey. And we are seeing it as well in New England. The Gulf of Maine, we call it Boston Harbor, after the

Arctic is the second fastest-warming body of water in the world. So we are seeing it. It is setting up conditions for a catastrophic storm or absolute disaster. So we are seeing it. No one can escape this.

I agree with your testimony. And that is why I am soon going to be reintroducing my Green Streets Act, which would reimagine how we prioritize transportation infrastructure investments. The bill would require States to invest in infrastructure like walking and biking and public transit that will reduce emissions, bring down costs and prevent more loss of life.

The bill would also require States to maintain their facilities in a state of good repair before expanding highways further. Well-maintained roads are safer, they are better for emissions, and they mean fewer potholes, flat tires, broken axles for American travelers.

The Green Streets Act is of course a climate bill. But it is also a safety and it is also an affordability bill as well. Because research indicates a 20 percent reduction in the number of miles traveled by car in this Country would reduce vehicle fuel and maintenance costs for the average American family by roughly $2,000 annually.

Even more importantly, the same reduction in miles traveled by car would save 180,000 lives by the year 2050 in our Country.

If there is anything more American than an automobile, it is consumer choice. And American families deserve a publicly funded transportation system that affords them the choice to travel safely, affordably and sustainably.

And I look forward to working with my colleagues on this committee, with you, Madam Mayor, with all concerned citizens in our Country to ensure that the next surface transportation bill addresses these issues.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

Senator Capito. Well, thank you.

I think we are coming to the end of our hearing. I appreciate everybody's testimony. I think there are a lot of similarities in whatever everybody is saying from the different standpoints of where you are. Permitting is something that Senator Whitehouse and I and our staffs talk about almost daily. We know that this is at the heart of the efficiency that I think most folks, and how the dollars can go farther than they can.

So with that, I have no more comments. Do you have a comment?

Senator Whitehouse. Just to emphasize the comment that I repeatedly make, which is that any bipartisan bill that does either surface transportation or permitting reform is going to have things in it that one side likes more than the other side likes. That is the nature of compromise on large pieces of

legislation.

Essential to going forward is some level of trust that the implementer of that legislation will be an honest implementer. If we are going to have to continue to live through this selective refusal to release appropriated and obligated funds, if we are going to have to deal with an implementer that will favor, for instance, only the fossil fuel projects but not the clean energy projects, that is a huge deterrent to getting this done.

I know I am not saying anything new here. It is obvious to anybody who has ever been involved in a negotiation in which the implementer has to be trusted to make it work. We are not at that place yet by any stretch. But I have nevertheless instructed my team to go forward to try to get big bills done, and we can get through that gate when we need to.

But I don't want anybody caught by surprise later on when we come to that gate and we don't see an implementer that we can trust and things come to a halt that is unexpected or surprises anybody.

So we are going forward in good faith. The Chairman has been very good to work with. I think we can have some confidence that we can do these big things.

But at the end of the day, there will be a gate that we have to get through. And that gate will be no more monkeying

around with faithful execution of the laws for partisan or special interest purposes. Simple as that.

Thank you, Madam Chairman.

Senator Capito. Thank you, Senator Whitehouse. I can't resists, but I said, the irony of what you just said describes the pain I felt over the last four years. Because the way we wrote the Highway Bill, the way the implementation and the guidance that went through went far afield from what the original intent of the bill was.

But we could argue about that, so I understand what you are saying. I think you are right. But I think you are right only because we have lived through this over the last four years.

So with no further questions, I would like to thank the witnesses and all my colleagues for your participation today. Senators who wish to submit written questions for the record have until 5:00 p.m. on Wednesday, July 30th, to do so. The witnesses' responses to those questions are due back to the committee no later than 5:00 p.m. on Wednesday, August 13th, and will be submitted for the record.

With that, the hearing is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 11:40 a.m., the hearing was adjourned.]