

Chairman Capito Outlines Surface Transportation Principles at Hearing with DOT Secretary Duffy

Below is the opening statement of Chairman Shelley Moore Capito (R-W.Va.) as delivered.

"Thank you for joining us this morning as we begin our work to develop the next Surface Transportation Reauthorization Bill. This hearing is the first of a two-part series that we are having to help us guide our work, and I really want to thank Secretary Duffy for being here with us today.

"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 American businesses, large and small, create jobs and economic opportunities, and enable that competitiveness in the global marketplace. They connect everything around us from Point A to Point B. Every state has transportation needs and stands to benefit from the Surface Transportation Reauthorization Bill.

"My home state of West Virginia is pursuing important projects, like the Coalfields Expressway, I'm specifically mentioning these in front of the Secretary, because he will be hearing from me on these two, Corridor H also, to better link our communities to essential services and economic opportunity. This legislation provides the funding and establishes the policies and programs that enable the improvement of the surface transportation network that we all so rely on.

"Since the enactment of the bipartisan Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, the EPW Committee has reviewed and conducted oversight of the existing policies and programs. We've learned a lot about what is working and what isn't. That effort has provided me with three key principles for the next bill. By focusing on these principles, I'm confident that we can work towards bipartisan legislation, as we have in the past, that will deliver results for the American people.

"Principle One: Improving the safety and reliability of America's surface transportation network with impactful investments.

"In recent years, we've seen an increase in the number and scope of federal transportation programs. These programs have often had duplicative purposes, and project availability and eligibility. This leads to an expensive and time-intensive process to get funding out the door that disrupts the focus of federal funding and lessens the impact that the legislation can make.

"As we craft the next Surface Transportation Reauthorization Bill we must make investments that instead, optimize the impact of federal funding and give state partners the confidence that they can invest over a longer period of time. We should focus on eliminating duplicative programs that invite regulatory overreach and increase funding for the highway formula programs that our states rely on and have a proven track record of success.

"Principle Two: Reforming and modernizing federal programs and policies to increase efficiency.

"We all know that as currently structured, federal requirements can add red-tape that increases costs and time, and slows down the completion of projects. We all want to deliver transportation benefits faster and save money for American taxpayers.

"To achieve this goal, we need to take a serious look at the federal requirements to determine how to make meaningful improvements to our planning and procurement procedures, our environmental review process for projects, and discretionary grants and loans requirements. By reforming and modernizing these requirements, we can create certainty for the partners who make these projects

happen and ensure that the public receives the benefits of these needed investments quickly.

"Principle Three: Addressing the variety of surface transportation needs across all states.

"Obviously, different states have different needs. I wouldn't expect West Virginia, with our mountainous peaks and valleys, to prioritize the same transportation projects in other states in other parts of the country. By avoiding top-down mandates from Washington, and giving states flexibility to address the individual improvements, I think that is what we need to be looking at. The bill can support our common goals while ensuring that federal regulations, programs, and policies recognize the different needs in our states.

"It will take collaboration from my Senate colleagues, our stakeholders, and the Trump administration in order to complete the bill before the IIJA expires in September of 2026. We must be pragmatic, and work in a bipartisan way, as we have in the past, to develop a Senate bill that sets us up for a productive conversation on this reauthorization effort with our colleagues in the House.

"I am grateful to Secretary Sean Duffy, who is here to share the Trump administration's priorities for this legislation, and I look forward to learning more about those priorities. The Department of Transportation's technical assistance and support will be critical parts of this process.

"This is an excellent opportunity ahead of us to make a pivotal impact in 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 this legislation."

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