

United States House Committee on Transportation & Infrastructure

Subcommittee on Highways and Transit

March 12, 2019

HVC-210, Capitol Visitor Center

10:00am

ALIGNING FEDERAL SURFACE TRANSPORTATION POLICY TO MEET 21ST CENTURY NEEDS

Witness Statement Highlights

The Honorable Ron Nirenberg, *Mayor, City of San Antonio, on behalf of the National League of Cities*

- A strong federal partnership is essential for providing modern mobility, regional connectivity, and safe forms of transportation. It is important to reauthorize essential transportation programs, and it will be critical to integrate all infrastructure investments to maximize efficiency. Also, continuing to adapt as technology does, innovation is needed to meet growing demands for better and more available transportation options.

Mr. Roger Millar, *Secretary, Washington State Department of Transportation, on behalf of the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials*

- Federal programs should support state DOTs in order to pursue multimodal transportation networks, there is no way to build out of congestion and instead we must create better systems. Also retaining a strong transportation workforce is an impending challenge, there needs to be investments in STEM education, on the job training, and apprenticeship programs in order to bring people into the workforce.

Mr. Darran Anderson, *Director of Strategy and Innovation, Texas Department of Transportation, on behalf of the Texas Innovation Alliance*

- Local and regional partners are the key to achieving mobility goals, and it is important to leverage resources and expertise across regions.

Mr. Jack Clark, *Executive Director, Transportation Learning Center*

- There is a workforce crisis in public transportation in particular. New technologies are changing the way transportation systems are executed and there are high-level skills needed for people in many transit jobs. On average, public transportation spends .66%-.88% of funds on training, and this is far too low. Again, apprenticeships and technical training will be critical to maintaining a modern and competitive workforce.

Ms. Therese W. McMillan, *Executive Director, Metropolitan Transportation Commission, on behalf of the Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations*

- Transportation is about access to opportunity and quality life, and a larger federal commitment is needed to support metropolitan areas, which are the engines of our nation's economy. In particular, both the Surface Transportation Block Grant Program, and Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program enable important flexibility on crafting solutions across different types of communities. The FAST Act works, and it is important that a transportation funding package supports it and restores the gas tax in order to maintain its solvency in the future. In particular SDBG should give localities 62.5% of available funds, if not higher, because directing dollars to metropolitan areas serves everyone's interests.

Mr. Al Stanley, *Vice President, Stanley Construction Company, Inc., on behalf of the Associated General Contractors of America*

- The FAST Act needs to address both the problems of today and tomorrow by ensuring its long-term solvency. A mileage user fee may be a way to do this, and this should be tested on a national model to see if it is feasible.

Mr. Michael Terry, *President and CEO, IndyGo - Indianapolis Public Transportation Corporation, on behalf of the American Public Transportation Association*

- Again, it is important to ensure the solvency of the Highway Trust Fund through an increase in the gas tax. Public transportation needs a strong federal partnership, as without it there will be a struggle to expand networks of access. The goal is to create first and last mile connections by integrating multiple modes of transport, and also federal funding programs, like Capital Investment Grants, offer great opportunities.

Hearing Takeaways

Multimodal Systems:

- Creating functional and efficient multimodal public transportation systems is key. It is impossible to out build congestion, we need to turn to public transportation and create alternative networks for residents that focus on a first-mile last-mile approach. There is a need to provide people with choice, and there is a growing interest by users for “mobility on-demand.”
 - Is there a way to centralize these choices? How can technology play a role here as well?
 - People want reliable, frequent services, and this requires resources.
 - For example, 40% of trips in Washington State are less than a mile in length, 60% of those trips are taken by car. How can this be addressed? Better investments in bike lanes, pedestrian infrastructure etc.
- Also looking at micro-transit systems, beyond where public transportation goes.
 - Integrate them into a larger more regional transit plan. Electric car sharing, Uber/Lyft, bike share programs.

Funding:

- Federal revenue streams have not scaled up, and communities are filling in the gaps, in particular with the Highway Trust Fund. There was a strong consensus over the need to reauthorize existing transportation programs, retain the current highway-transit framework for the FAST Act, while also increasing funds to the Highway Trust Fund to ensure its solvency.
 - There were some conversations on supporting a gas tax and also the use of Public-Private partnerships. Again, regarding all these as tools in a toolbox, the more options for revenue available, the better.
 - Financing is another tool, but it is not funding. Funding needs to be the main focus.
 - Some discussions on mileage-user-based programs but it needs to be tested on a national scale. What are the results of pilot programs?
- There was a lot of conversation surrounding the certainty of funding and its impact on the creation of long-term projects. There is a need for funding that focuses on today’s challenges and brings systems up to a state of good repair. Long-term projects are also relying on short term funding. The certainty of funding is critical when making resource decisions, it is hard to look far into the future when you are looking at federal funds only in 5-6 year increments. A strong federal partnership is needed to give confidence to state/local governments to invest in certain projects.

Role of MPOs and Local/State/Federal Partnerships:

- There was significant emphasis placed on maintaining strong federal-state-local level partnerships. How can collaboration happen across states and communities as well?

- Organizations (such as Texas Innovation Alliance) are sharing best practices in real time. Multimodal systems are being developed that span across multiple cities. Information sharing across organizations is crucial to developing stronger transportation systems, including what works and what doesn't. Connecting communities is vital for continuing economic development.
- Both the Surface Transportation Block Grant Program (**STBGP**) and the Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program (**CMAQ**) enable important flexibility on crafting solutions across different types of communities. Witness McMillan suggested that SDBG should designate at least 62.5% of available funds to localities and emphasized that directing dollars to metropolitan areas serves everyone's interests.
- There was importance placed on giving MPOs flexibility and recognizing that cities and counties can address localized impacts and needs, while simultaneously creating solutions across regions that lift everyone up.
- While state and local governments have stepped up, it was never to replace the federal dollar, only to augment it.
- Smaller and more rural communities need a partnership at the federal level to get resources they may not normally have access to.
- 73% of new projects are funded by federal funds, but maintenance of existing systems is often left to state and local governments. There needs to be a balance between maintaining old and investing in the new.

Workforce and Labor:

- Workplace training needs to comprise a larger percent of payrolls, particularly in the public transportation sector. There is a need to invest in attracting people to these jobs, as a large percentage are nearing retirement age.
 - How can we do this? There is great support for apprenticeship programs, and technical training that can be learned in an on-the-job structured environment.
 - Engage at a younger level, including in middle school and high school to teach them about the construction trade. Also, in Washington State the DOT is working with prisons to help transition released prisoners into the transportation sector.
- Need to ensure that there is not a "race to the bottom" with wages, especially with Lyft/Uber. How can the federal government better protect workers in the transportation sector?

Environment:

- Congestion is a large contributor to climate change; public transportation, biking, and walking are better alternatives. How can these types of transport be incentivized?
- With more funding, it could be possible to convert freight fleets to alternative fuel and reduce the number of trips taken by maximizing freight logistics.

Housing:

- The relationship between housing and transportation was discussed numerous times. These issues are intersecting, you need to consider housing vulnerabilities when addressing developing transportation networks.
 - Using federal funds to build housing near transportation hubs, also ties back into first-mile last-mile approach to transportation. Are we ensuring networks are reaching where people live and work?

Data:

- Need better data on what communities' needs are. More accurate data can help address problems in transportation sector.
 - How is data shared? Need good data to know where to invest funds.
 - It is also important to have better and more comprehensive data on underserved communities to have a clearer picture of how their needs can be properly addressed.