

Chairman Hal Rogers
House Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies
Fiscal Year 2015 Budget Hearing: Department of Transportation
Secretary Anthony Foxx
March 12, 2014
Opening Statement As Prepared

Mr. Chairman, thank you for yielding. Secretary Foxx, I appreciate you being with us today to discuss the Fiscal Year 2015 budget request for the Department of Transportation. Because Ranking Member Lowey and I have committed to move all 12 appropriations bills through subcommittee, full committee, and the floor, we plan to move our process along at a brisk pace this year. Unquestionably, this return to regular order is critical to crafting bills that wisely expend taxpayer dollars. The FY14 omnibus package is a prime example of what we can accomplish together: This committee was able to provide every facet of the federal government with adequate, responsible funding, while continuing to reduce federal spending – totaling \$165 billion in cuts since fiscal year 2010.

While these hard-fought reductions on the discretionary side of the ledger have been critically important and given us all an opportunity to make our government more lean and efficient, the reality is that we need to tackle our mandatory spending problem. Today, mandatory spending accounts for 64% of the federal budget, and is the real driver of our debt. Yet I see no leadership from this Administration to tackle this issue in the budget. Quite to the contrary, this budget proposes to shift even more money into mandatory programs for infrastructure spending, offloading approximately \$4.2 billion worth of Fiscal Year 2014 programs and activities onto the mandatory side. Just as disappointing, your proposal once again utilizes budget gimmicks that Congress has time and again shown no appetite for – such as a doubling of passenger facility fees or a non-existent, non-authorized Transportation Trust Fund. Candidly, Mr. Secretary, our Committee can't budget with imaginary money, and neither should your agency.

I am also concerned about the priorities of this Administration which continues to push billions of dollars towards short stretches of high-speed rail projects when roads and bridges around the country are in need of repair. California is banking on receiving upwards of \$40 billion for its high-speed rail projects, including \$2.5 billion in FY15 alone. How can we look our constituents in the eye and with a straight face tell them that a stretch of high-speed railway in California with sparse ridership potential is a better use of federal tax dollars than bridges over the Ohio River, or an interstate route through eastern Kentucky? It is our job to ask those questions and set those priorities straight in our appropriations process.

Secretary Foxx, I look forward to hearing your testimony and your plans for improving our nation's infrastructure through these difficult budgetary times. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I yield back.

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