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**Testimony before the House Appropriations Subcommittee on
Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies**
U.S. Representative Jimmy Panetta (CA-20)
March 9, 2017

Chairman Diaz-Balart, Ranking Member Price, thank you for allowing me the opportunity to speak this morning. Although new to Congress, I am keenly aware of the Appropriations Committee's annual check on our nation's priorities through the power of the purse. I am grateful to appear before you today and talk about the important programs that are critical to my district's transportation infrastructure and economy.

Department of Transportation

My district has been hit hard by a series of record setting storms during the last six weeks that have washed out major roads and highways, isolated communities and threatened homes and property. The Pacific Coast Highway remains temporarily closed in many places between Ragged Point and Carmel. Near Lucia, debris from a nearby landslide covered a lane of traffic and closed an eight-mile section of road. Boulders are being cleared with dynamite charges to make removal easier. Repair crews are on the ground in an attempt to repair this All American Road as quickly as possible, but with more rain forecast for the coming days many are concerned whether this work will have a lasting impact. Today, I want to highlight the importance of a strong Emergency Relief program.

In addition to the debris blocking parts of Highway 1, the Pfeiffer Canyon Bridge in Big Sur has suffered irreparable structural damage and has started to sink into the mountainside. Last month, Caltrans, the State's transportation authority, closed the bridge to vehicles and pedestrians, cutting the Big Sur community in half and profoundly affecting residents and the local economy. This is not the first time Big Sur has suffered because of extreme weather events and our failing infrastructure. In 1982, parts of Highway 1 were closed for 13 months after a massive mudslide buried more than a quarter-mile of the road. In the wake of this event, four hundred people lost their jobs and the tourist industry lost nearly \$34 million.

We cannot allow for history to repeat itself. If not replaced quickly, the Pfeiffer Canyon Bridge closure could devastate the economies of communities in the Big Sur area, which rely on an influx of tourists during the spring and summer months. It is times like this when communities like mine look to the Federal Highway Administration's Emergency Relief Program (ER) for assistance.

I appreciate the \$1 billion supplemental appropriation included in last year's continuing resolution, and encourage the committee to continue to provide robust support for this critical program.

I also would also like to take this opportunity to highlight an important program my predecessor, Sam Farr authored, the Small Transit Intensive Cities (STIC) program. Funded through a set-aside of Section 5307 formula funds, the STIC program has been used by smaller transit systems, like Santa Cruz Metro and Monterey Salinas Transit, to expand service and upgrade and modernize facilities to improve the quality of public transit service in smaller, rural communities. I encourage the Subcommittee provide robust funding to the Section 5307 formula program.

Many of your districts may be experiencing unacceptable noise levels as a result of Next Gen route changes. In my district, the windows were shaking in homes in the flight path as planes prepared to land at San Francisco Airport. While the FAA says the noise is within the acceptable 65 Day Night Level (DNL), that standard was developed more than a decade ago. I believe the FAA needs to conduct an expedited review of the 65 DNL standard and incorporate actual noise sampling, not just rely on modeling and simulation. Therefore, I ask the Committee to include report language urging the FAA to expedite the DNL review and to provide the Committee with a report no later than 60 days after enactment of the ACT describing a pilot program for conducting actual noise sampling as part of the DNL review.

Department of Housing and Urban Development

While the goal of permanent housing is laudable, in some communities the difficulty of finding permanent housing is a challenge because of affordability and scarcity. I urge the committee to strengthen funding for transitional housing grants which continue to be heavily utilized in my district for homeless veterans housing. I also urge the Committee to fully fund the VASH-HUD program as not less than the FY17 level.

Continuum of Care

While we may have made great strides in reducing the nation's homeless population through sustained funding across multiple agencies, we need to continue our efforts. I urge the Committee to fully fund the CoC program as no less than the FY17 level.

CDBG

This is one of the most effective federal programs that provides critical economic support to more than 1,200 low- and moderate-income communities across the nation. CDBG touches the lives of virtually every American by funding affordable housing, public infrastructure improvements, employment training and economic development, while also providing public services for seniors, youth and the disabled. I urge the Committee to fund CDBG at no less than the FY17 level.

Though we have not yet seen the President's budget proposal for FY18, it is my hope that he is serious in his commitment to improving our transportation infrastructure through a mix of increased federal and private investments. Your subcommittee has the opportunity to make infrastructure investments that are desperately needed in districts all across the nation so that we can ensure a modern transportation system that sustains economic growth.

The programs I have highlighted are critical to my home and the communities that depend on a robust public transportation infrastructure, affordable housing and resources for our most

vulnerable populations. Thank you for the opportunity to advocate on behalf of these programs