



Chairman Rodney Frelinghuysen

House Committee on Appropriations

**Transportation, Housing and Urban Development Appropriations Subcommittee
Department of Transportation - FY 2018 Budget Hearing
Secretary Elaine Chao
June 15, 2017
Opening Statement As Prepared**

Thank you, Mr. Chairman for the time and I also want to welcome Secretary Elaine Chao to the Appropriations Committee. We look forward to your testimony and hearing your frank and candid views on the many issues.

Today's hearing is an important part of the oversight duties of this Committee. After all, the "power of the purse" lies in this building - it is the Constitutional duty of Congress to make spending decisions on behalf of the people we represent at home.

As Secretary of Transportation, you are responsible for maintaining and improving our nation's infrastructure. As we pursue policies and programs to grow our economy, so too, must our infrastructure grow to support it.

In that context, I would like to bring up a critical project for our national economy: the Gateway Program and Hudson Tunnel Project. As you may know, the Northeast Corridor regional economy, encompassing over 50 million people from DC to Boston, produces approximately \$3 trillion in output, equal to 20% of our national GDP. Safe and reliable passenger rail travel through New Jersey and New York City is essential to that economic productivity.

Rebuilding the Hudson Tunnels is of vital importance to my home state of New Jersey. From 2002-2014, the number of New Jersey residents commuting to Manhattan grew by more than 35%. However, my constituents have been plagued by perpetual delays and decaying infrastructure commuting, and reverse commuting, into New York City.

Given the clear benefits of this project and disastrous consequences of inaction, I am concerned about the FY18 budget provision regarding limiting funding for Capital Investment Grants (New Starts). I am eager to hear how the Department plans to support this vital infrastructure project for New Jersey and New York.

I have also taken note of the Administration's proposal to spend \$200 billion on targeted federal investments to leverage private sector resources so that the ends result is at least \$1 trillion in total infrastructure spending. I would like to hear more about the specifics of this proposal and how it will improve infrastructure planning for state and local governments.

In conclusion, I welcome Secretary Chao. I look forward to hearing from you and working with you in the months ahead.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I yield back.

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