



# **Chairman Mario Diaz-Balart**

*Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing and Urban  
Development, and Related Agencies  
House Committee on Appropriations*

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## **Rail Safety and Infrastructure—Stakeholder Perspectives**

**April 11, 2018**

### **Opening Statement**

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The Subcommittee will come to order.

Today, we have convened a panel of key rail stakeholders to hear their perspectives on rail safety and infrastructure.

We know that the rail network is a critical component of our transportation system and the economy. It carries one-third of U.S. exports, delivers 5 million tons of freight, and transports about 85,000 passengers every day via intercity passenger rail, and many more if you count commuter rail.

In today's hearing, we will discuss the significance of rail to this nation, its effect on the economy, and consider the funding needs for this critical mode of transportation – particularly as we turn our attention to crafting our fiscal year 2019 budget.

Our distinguished panel today consists some of the key players in this area. I would like to welcome: Stephen Gardner, Executive Vice President of Amtrak; Ed Hamberger, President and Chief Executive Officer of the Association of American Railroads; James Derwinski, CEO and Executive Director of Metra Commuter Rail; and John Fry, President of Drexel University

Thank you for being here.

As you know, recently there was a significant bipartisan breakthrough in Congress that set the stage for us to invest in our nation's future – including the program under the jurisdiction of this subcommittee.

And that is exactly what we did when we passed the recent omnibus for FY 2018. This subcommittee invested over \$10 billion in new infrastructure. Our appropriations bill was, in many respects, an infrastructure bill.

The bill provided a total of \$3.1 billion for the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), an increase of more than \$1.2 billion, or 67 percent, over the FY 2017 enacted level. We provided increases to every FRA account ranging from research and safety accounts, to Amtrak, and to

infrastructure and safety grant programs. All of these programs are vitally important to our nation's rail system.

The bill also provided substantial funding increases to Federal Transit Administration programs, plus \$1.5 billion for TIGER grants—a 300 percent increase from the FY 2017 enacted level.

These funding levels will allow us to make critical investments in rail infrastructure, address the maintenance backlog to ensure a state of good repair, and to increase the safety of our rail system in FY 2018; and we expect to continue to make critical investments in our nation's rail infrastructure in 2019.

We would like to hear from our panel today about their views on rail infrastructure and safety, the importance of the rail system to our communities and our national economy, and what Congress can do to make sure that our nation continues to move forward in the right direction. We want to make sure our investments meet our common goals—to continue to improve safety, address the state of good repair backlog, and advance our economic competitiveness. You are here today as key partners in this effort.

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