Mr. Tonko's Opening

The Subcommittee on Environment and Climate Change will now come to order. I recognize myself for five minutes for the purposes of an opening statement.

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Today's hearing is another benchmark in our series examining decarbonization of our economy by mid-century.

Transportation is the largest source of greenhouse gas emissions in America. While debate is often focused on light-duty automobiles, more than 40% of the sector's emissions come from other sources— buses, trucks, ships, trains, and planes.

Much like at our September hearing on the industrial sector, it will quickly become apparent that non-light duty segments of transportation have numerous challenges to overcome in order to achieve necessary, ambitious decarbonization targets.

For one, in recent decades there has been growth in Vehicle Miles Traveled, and in many cases, this growth is expected to continue.

Second, these vehicles are capital-intensive investments with slow turnover. Investment decisions being made today will impact the emissions profile of the sector— and in turn our ability to decarbonize it— for decades to come.

Other significant barriers— cost, technology development, and infrastructure needs— will not be news to anyone.

We know that we need investments in research, especially in advanced batteries and fuel cells.

We need new infrastructure to enable the transition, including a national network of alternative fueling and charging stations.

And we need greater market demand for cleaner fuels.

Transportation emissions are a diverse set of challenges. Transforming the sector will be no easy task. But many of the principles we have been discussing as part of our broader, economy-wide approach apply here.

We need to ensure that pollution reduction— both climate and traditional air pollutants— occurs in frontline communities near ports, airports, and highways.

We must be open to many different technologies and pathways to decarbonization.

And we need a comprehensive, portfolio approach.

Establishing a price signal can be a critical component of our response and can speed up adoption and innovation in low-emissions alternatives, but carbon pricing is not a silver bullet, and that is especially true for transportation.

We must look to performance standards and other complementary investments, such as in research and infrastructure.

Today, we will hear recommendations from across the sector that should push us towards this portfolio approach.

And while the challenges seem daunting, there are great solutions already being developed and deployed today.

Some are commercially available right now. More are expected to become viable in the near future.

Efficiency remains a top solution across all modes.

For medium- and heavy-duty vehicles, the National Academies recently found strengthening fuel economy standards can reduce fuel consumption by as much as 30% by 2030.

Electrification is also a powerful solution for certain parts of the sector.

We have seen the potential of EVs with light-duty vehicles, and today, adoption of electric buses is occurring at an even faster rate than passenger vehicles.

Public and private sector leaders have quickly come to realize the opportunities from electrifying transit and school buses and delivery trucks—

vehicles that take shorter, often predetermined, routes and can take advantage of predictable periods of non-use for charging.

But electrification is not the only option. In applications facing weight or distance concerns, hydrogen energy is a very promising solution, especially given the speed of refueling.

This has enabled fuel cells to find a role in warehouses. They are beginning to be deployed in ports and on tarmacs, and there are great opportunities for long-haul freight trucking powered by hydrogen.

Despite these exciting options, which are rapidly becoming more affordable, there will likely still be a need for lower-emissions liquid fuels for years to come.

This is especially true for maritime and aviation where sustainable fuels are just beginning to be commercialized.

Development of cost-competitive, drop-in fuels, largely compatible with existing systems, is critical for these very difficult to decarbonize applications.

I hope today's hearing will help us better understand what we will need to do to help develop demand for new, cleaner fuels.

But in all these cases, major innovation in transportation will not happen without our leadership, partnership, and vision for building the enabling infrastructure.

I thank our witnesses for being here and look forward to your testimony.