

Thank you Mr. Chairman,

- First off, I'd like to thank Chairman DeFazio and Ranking Member Graves for hosting this hearing.
- I appreciate the opportunity to come before the Committee to highlight some of the major challenges facing my district of Staten Island and South Brooklyn.
- Despite being part of New York City, you'd never think it based on how my district gets around.
- 68 percent of Staten Island drives to and from work, as opposed to 22 percent in Manhattan.
- I've heard people blame Staten Island's "car culture" for the City's congestion problem—but that just ignores the root cause of the issue.
- Because for too many of my constituents, public transit just isn't a reliable or credible alternative.
- And until that changes, we need to stop punishing hardworking people who are just trying to get to work on time.
- The reason we're stuck in this situation is that my district has been forgotten when it comes to federal, state and local attention to our transportation needs.
- When it comes time to invest in transportation projects, Staten Island and South Brooklyn have been second thoughts throughout the years. Staten Island has one railroad, one ferry, and an express buses system to Manhattan.
- The R Train which serves South Brooklyn is currently scheduled to receive signal upgrades to our subways in a decade.
- A decade.
- I understand that many communities around New York City and the country need improvements to their daily commutes.
- But so do my constituents—and we can't wait another ten years for it.

- As always, I didn't just come here to complain.
- I came with some real proposals that can make a difference in my constituents' lives.

- First, I encourage the committee to sit down and craft a long-term infrastructure bill. An infrastructure bill that makes real, significant investments to make American infrastructure the envy of the world again.
- I want it, the American people want it, and I know that many members of this committee want it.
- Let's come together and get to work on behalf of the American people.

- Second, I'd like to ask the Committee to look at new ways to calculate commuter tax credits.
- While the current system is based on miles travelled, anyone who knows New York City knows just doesn't help.
- Most drivers commute for less than 15 miles, yet it often takes more than an hour to get there.
- On top of that, my district has the dubious honor of having the most expensive tolled bridge in the country.
- My constituents are getting squeezed on all sides, hit with longer and longer commutes, tolls that keep going up, and often times no real alternative mode of transit.
- If nothing else, calculating commuter tax credits according to the real cost of commuting would be an equitable step and provide a much needed sense of relief.

- Lastly, I want to encourage the Committee to build in competitive grant programs that support innovation in transportation.
- We've seen how ride-hailing technology has reshaped how Americans move around, and I believe that with federal support, we can develop equally revolutionary methods of reducing the number of cars on the road while getting people where they need to go quickly and reliably.
- For instance, investment that improves access to mass transit can significantly increase ridership in Staten Island and South Brooklyn.

We would love to use mass transit more, but it needs to be a viable option for us.

- In my conversations with Members of this Committee, I've been encouraged by your desire to effect real change in the way that America moves around.
- We all came here to make the American people's lives better, and I've shared with many of you the sentiment that there's no better way to do that than to ensure people get to and from work quickly and reliably and can spend more time at home with their families.
- Thank you for the opportunity to speak, I look forward to working with you all going forward.