

OPENING STATEMENT
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House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology
Subcommittee on Research and Technology
“Composite Materials-Strengthening Infrastructure Development”
April 18, 2018

Thank you Chairwoman Comstock and Ranking Member Lipinski for holding this hearing to review the National Institute of Standards and Technology report on overcoming barriers to adoption of composites in sustainable infrastructure. And thank you to the expert witnesses for being here this morning as we discuss the value of developing composites standards for infrastructure applications.

As a senior Member of the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, I understand the challenges we face with aging and deteriorating infrastructure. While my home district of Dallas, Texas was recently named the fastest growing metropolitan area in the country by the U.S. Census, it was also rated as the 10th worst city in the nation for traffic congestion in another recent report. Though this is an improvement from last year’s position in the number 5 spot, commuters still face the daily tackle with bottlenecks, wasting time and fuel. This is a struggle that many communities face – welcoming growth but struggling to provide sufficient infrastructure. Local Dallas leadership, as well as the city of Los Angeles, are even looking to flying cars to address the congestion problem, signing up as the first two testbeds for Uber Elevate.

While this is truly an example of reaching for the stars, these big ideas and emerging technologies may be the answer to our infrastructure needs. The most recent American Society of Civil Engineers *Infrastructure Report Card* put in black and white what we know all too well – our infrastructure is just short of failing. With a grade of D+, we must look to innovative ways to improve our nation’s infrastructure. It is necessary to ensure that our transportation infrastructure, as well as the infrastructure that supplies our electricity, water and other critical needs, is safe enough to handle the demand of our growing population and resilient enough to continue functioning during more frequent and powerful extreme weather events.

I sometimes describe NIST as the most important least known agency in our government. After serving on the Science Committee for more than 20 years, I know the good work that NIST does to help U.S. industry be competitive through its leadership in measurement science and standards development. I was very pleased to see that NIST fared well in the FY 18 Omnibus. It is important that Congress fully fund NIST and provide the agency with adequate funding so that it can continue doing the important work that we will be discussing today. The NIST workshop and report seems to have made great strides in gathering key stakeholders and identifying three main barriers to wider adoption of composites in infrastructure. We, as policymakers, must make efforts to understand the complexity of our nation’s build environment. This includes supporting a bold research and standards development agenda that maintains safety priorities and the U.S. in leadership position in advanced composites for infrastructure applications.

I look forward to today’s testimony and discussion, and I yield back.