



U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES COMMITTEE ON
SCIENCE, SPACE, & TECHNOLOGY

Opening Statement

Ranking Member Zoe Lofgren (D-CA)

Research and Technology Subcommittee Hearing:

“Accelerating Progress: U.S. Surface Transportation Research”

February 11, 2026

Thank you, Chairman Obernolte and Ranking Member Stevens, for holding today’s hearing. I would also like to thank our expert panel of witnesses for being here and for your testimony.

While some topics we cover on this committee can feel abstract or futuristic, like quantum computing, surface transportation affects the lives of nearly every person in this country every day. Each year, the nation’s roads, highways, and mass transit systems allow Americans to travel trillions of miles and ship trillions of dollars in goods and services.

But we also need to be clear-eyed about the challenges before us. Our nation has crumbling infrastructure. Despite the historic investments made under the Biden Administration, the American Society of Civil Engineers still gave the nation a C in its most recent infrastructure report card. 39% of major roads in the U.S. are in poor or mediocre condition. It surely does not help that the Trump Administration has unilaterally terminated billions of dollars of commitments made under Bipartisan Infrastructure Act, entirely for partisan reasons.

The Administration’s ill-considered tariffs and other actions against our international partners are also contributing to inflation and supply chain disruptions that are increasing construction costs and threatening our states’ ability to keep up with growing transportation needs.

Our colleagues on the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee will debate how best to support our roads, rails, and bridges over the next 5 years. In the Science Committee, our job is to look further into the future to the transportation solutions and innovations of tomorrow. It is through research that we will have an opportunity to make our transportation systems safer, cheaper, more efficient, and more environmentally friendly.

Researchers are exploring ways to make roads self-healing or methods to recycle pavement to make our roads more environmentally friendly. Research can help us identify and address supply chain shocks and understand how they may affect transportation needs. Finally, as we modernize our transportation systems with automation and sustainable technologies, research will remain critical to understanding the impact of those technologies on legacy infrastructure.

One of the key federal investments in transportation research is the University Transportation Center program. This program supports consortia of universities that tackle major transportation topics, from smart infrastructure to next generation GPS and autonomous vehicles. I am pleased to see two UTCs represented on the panel today.

Unfortunately, the Administration's mishandling of this long-standing and successful program shows yet another instance of manufactured chaos. Last May, Secretary Duffy chose to terminate 7 grants to UTCs, including one at San Jose State University in my district, on the basis that the grants didn't meet the new priorities of the Department. This action immediately halted over 40 specific research projects supporting nearly 100 faculty and students across four universities.

Frankly, this decision was completely unfair to the universities that competed for these awards. Awardees didn't have a say in the criteria that were set by Congress and implemented by the previous Administration.

Last summer, Transportation and Infrastructure Ranking Member Larsen and I sent the Department a letter calling for this decision to be reconsidered. While I was heartened by the Department's ultimate decision to re-compete the terminated awards, I worry that these arbitrary terminations will shake confidence in DOT as a reliable partner, stall future transportation research programs, and further hamper the next generation of the transportation workforce.

The most recent surface transportation law, the Bipartisan Infrastructure Act, expires in September of this year. I am looking forward to engaging with Dr. Babin, the transportation research community, the Administration, and the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee for the impending reauthorization. I hope the ideas shared with the Committee today can help inform our important work.

Thank you and I yield back.