



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

Opening Statement

Chairwoman Eddie Bernice Johnson (D-TX)

Subcommittee on Investigations and Oversight Hearing:
*The Need for Resilience: Preparing America's Transportation Infrastructure for
Climate Change*
May 21, 2019

Thank you Madam Chair, and I would like to join you in welcoming our witnesses this morning.

In the 116th Congress, the Science Committee will be examining both the science of climate change and its impact on our society. Transportation infrastructure is critical to our national economy and our way of life, but it is vulnerable to climate change. If we do not prepare our transportation systems effectively, the damage will be enormous.

As a senior Member of the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, I am very familiar with the challenges facing our transportation infrastructure. And it has become increasingly clear to me that climate change will be one of the most consequential and complex challenges. Climate implications exist for every type of transportation asset: highways and roads, bridges, railroads, airports, tunnels, ports and more. Every region of America is being affected: north and south; urban and rural; coastal and inland. The time has come to use the scientific tools at our disposal to adapt our transportation infrastructure in order to avoid the worst effects of a changing climate.

Elevating the use of science in policymaking is a priority for this Committee, and the issue of transportation resilience is a perfect example of why that is so important. Transportation assets are designed and built to operate over extremely long timespans – multiple decades and sometimes as long as 100 years. As a result, today's transportation planning decisions are not only about us – they will affect our great-grandchildren. If transportation planning does not incorporate climate resilience into its calculations, the vulnerabilities of our transportation infrastructure will become a permanent feature of American life. We must work to ensure that the most advanced climate research findings are integrated into transportation planning frameworks.

I also want to highlight the importance of mobilizing the nation's research enterprise to promote transportation climate resilience. At a federal level, this means encouraging the Department of Transportation and NIST to carry out research on how a changing climate threatens transportation assets. It also means prioritizing climate resilience research through federal grant programs such as DOT's University Transportation Centers program, which is a longstanding

area of interest for the Committee. The UTC program supports cutting-edge transportation research at academic institutions around the country. UTCs like the one led by Mr. Winfree at Texas A&M are conducting some of the most innovative transportation research in the world. We want to make sure that the fruits of their labors, and the efforts of other forward-looking universities, professional societies and engineers, are being shared effectively with cities and states around the country.

Preparing America's transportation infrastructure for the impacts of climate change is one of the major economic challenges facing our country, and there is much to be done.

Thank you, and I yield back to Chairwoman Sherrill.