



Chairman Hal Rogers

House Committee on Appropriations

**Full Committee Markup – FY 2016 Transportation, Housing and Urban Development
Appropriations Bill
May 13, 2015
Opening Statement As Prepared**

Good morning. Thank you all for being here on time.

The purpose of today's meeting is to mark up the Fiscal Year 2016 Transportation, Housing and Urban Development Appropriations Bill, and to make minor technical adjustments to the 302(b) allocations that this Committee has already approved.

Before we begin today, I'd like everyone to keep in their thoughts and prayers the passengers, employees, first responders, victims, and their families who were involved in last night's Amtrak derailment just outside of Philadelphia.

A number of agencies in this bill – the Department of Transportation, Federal Railroad Administration, Amtrak, Philadelphia's transit agency partially funded through the Federal Transit Administration, and the National Transportation Safety Board are all working to respond to the derailment, investigate the cause of this accident, and provide aid and comfort to the victims and their families.

It will be a while before we get answers on the why and how this happened. The NTSB is onsite, initiating their investigation. I know the Federal Railroad Administration and Amtrak will be there to cooperate and assist in any way possible.

This is why it is so important that the Committee complete its work, so that these agencies can do their work.

The Fiscal Year 2016 Transportation, Housing and Urban Development bill is the fourth measure we have had before the Committee this year. This bill strikes a smart, intentional balance between funding essential infrastructure and housing programs, and making responsible reductions to lower-priority programs.

As the Chairman said, the bill provides \$55.27 billion for our nation's transportation agencies and for housing options for our nation's most vulnerable citizens. This total is \$1.5 billion above last year's level, but in real dollars – given the reduced offsets caused largely by a decline in FHA receipts – this bill represents only a \$25 million increase above the FY 2015 level.

While adhering to tough levels, this bill makes the best possible choices within these tight budget constraints.

Funding is targeted toward critical infrastructure –programs that keep our commerce moving, and that make our roads, rails, ports, and airways safer and more efficient for those who use them.

The bill includes \$40.25 billion from the Highway Trust Fund for our highways – the same as last year. This funding for our highways is contingent on a new transportation authorization, but I am optimistic the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee will live up to the task.

The bill also includes robust funding for the Federal Aviation Administration, supporting programs to help ease future congestion and reduce delays for all of the flying public.

Safety continues to be a priority for the Committee, and key agencies, like the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration and the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration, receive responsible increases to manage and implement safety improvements to our roadways and to the transport of energy products.

Within the Department of Housing and Urban Development, funding is provided to continue affordable housing and assistance for all families and individuals currently served. It also includes targeted increases for programs that help those most vulnerable – including Housing for the Elderly and Housing for Persons with Disabilities. And the bill provides support for planning and development programs that will help local communities grow and thrive.

However, in this fiscal landscape, tough funding decisions within this bill had to be made, and we're going to face even more hard choices as this process goes on. Reductions to lower-priority programs, inefficient agencies, and non-essential spending that can be postponed were made in order to adhere to our topline number.

This balance allows for important investments in national transportation infrastructure and programs that promote our economic well-being, and to help those people who are in dire need of affordable housing options.

I will now turn to our Full Committee Ranking Member, Nita Lowey, for her remarks on this bill.

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