



STATEMENT OF

**THE HONORABLE RON NIRENBERG,
MAYOR, CITY OF SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS**

ON BEHALF OF THE NATIONAL LEAGUE OF CITIES

**BEFORE THE
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE, SUBCOMMITTEE ON
HIGHWAYS AND TRANSIT**

**“ALIGNING FEDERAL SURFACE TRANSPORTATION POLICY TO MEET 21ST CENTURY NEEDS”
MARCH 13, 2019
WASHINGTON, DC**

Good morning, Chair Norton, Ranking Member Davis and Members of the Subcommittee:

I am Ron Nirenberg, Mayor of San Antonio, Texas, the nation's seventh largest city and the fastest growing city in the U.S. I am honored to be here today on behalf of the City of San Antonio and the National League of Cities (NLC), the nation's oldest and largest network of cities, towns and villages across America.

Rebuild America's Infrastructure

Cities are ready to work with this Committee to increase infrastructure investment and to reauthorize our essential transportation programs. In fact, right now there are over 2,000 local officials in D.C. here to meet with their Members of Congress to reiterate that infrastructure must be Congress' top priority this year. We ask that this Committee work with local leaders to forge a bipartisan path forward.

Local leaders want to play a larger role in rebuilding America's infrastructure in collaboration with our federal and state partners. Every day, city leaders hear from our citizens, and they're quick to tell us – they want modern mobility options that are efficient, reliable, cost-effective, and safe. [From budget commitments to bonding to ballot initiatives](#), local officials have shown that when given the opportunity to leverage federal investments in our regions and give our citizens the mobility they want, we will follow through.

Today, you have asked for our feedback on aligning our transportation policy to meet cities' needs across the country. We believe strongly the U.S. needs to shape its transportation approach for the future with both our growing megaregions and our small towns in mind. Cities like San Antonio are growing rapidly along with congestion that demands new approaches, not just more lanes. We should all be equally invested in bridging the urban-rural divide in our country because investing in what connects every American is a predictor of success for both rural and urban areas. To accomplish this, local leaders encourage Congress to focus on three key areas: investing in mobility, regional connectivity, and data-driven safety programs.

Invest in Citizens' Mobility

Cities believe the mobility of our citizens should be our new measure of success in the next reauthorization. Cities of all sizes are not only piloting technology-driven solutions with their partners but are harnessing new mobility options in their existing pain points and throughout their regions. Without a doubt, we also acknowledge these new mobility options are not replacing our existing strategic transportation investments. In fact, they are more important than ever because innovators are leveraging them. Ride hailing use our roads and curb space. Rapid buses move on dedicated road lanes. Bikeshare and scooters use bike lanes and transit exchange points. Traffic management solutions leverage our city signs, lights and broadband. Investing in mobility is about committing to innovation and building off our strategic assets.

In San Antonio, we are embracing this strategy. We are building a framework for modern mobility called ConnectSA. We are focused on better access for all our citizens by leveraging innovative transit options and improving traffic flow through our city. Our goal is to seamlessly integrate last-mile options like scooters and bikes and to invest in reliable and frequent buses for an advanced rapid transit network while we manage congestion to accommodate our future growth.

Local officials also recognize that innovation is currently not equally distributed. However, if Congress could right-size federal programs for urban, growing and small communities, new mobility models could move more quickly into small and medium communities. Communities of all sizes see tremendous value in right-sizing technology and mobility models to allow greater on-demand service for both seniors, workers heading to major employers, and for late-shift workers to have a dependable ride home. Investing in mobility like this could change the lives of so many of our residents at home.

Invest in Regional Connectivity

The U.S. is now the most [congested developed country](#) in the world, with Americans spending an entire work week each year stuck in traffic. More than two out of every five miles of the nation's urban interstates are congested, and most of them flow straight through our major urban cores. Creating and sustaining a transportation network that works – a platform for commerce and human interaction – is one of the oldest and most important functions of government.

The fastest growing region in the nation is the 74-mile corridor anchored by San Antonio and Austin. This is the western half of the Texas Triangle, and America's next great metropolis. We have all the elements of a successful metro economy: world-class universities, an educated and expanding workforce, a burgeoning tech community, relatively affordable land and a business friendly environment. Achieving the full economic potential of this San Antonio-Austin mega-region requires investing in connectivity to reduce congestion. Current congestion risks this growth coming to a grinding halt. By 2040, the Interstate 35 corridor population will rival the Dallas-Fort Worth area's current size. We are working with our metropolitan planning organizations to expand capacity and utilize technology, and a regional rail line continues to hold enormous promise.

We need a federal partner that invests in the essential connectivity options that will keep our regions growing. A regionally-driven strategy can build partnerships and bold solutions that fit each area's needs. One size will not fit all, but no one is better equipped to evaluate and prioritize than those on the ground at the local and regional level. New programs, Federal Surface Transportation Block Grants, Transit New Starts, Transportation Alternatives, multimodal Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) and Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) grants, and smaller grants like Mobility on Demand will all be critical to a future of innovative mobility and regional cooperation.

Demand for these grants far exceeds the amount of available funds. Each year, USDOT sees many times more applications for BUILD grants than they have funds available which should be a startling statistic if we are committed to meeting America's intermodal needs for the future.

Invest in Data-Driven Safety

In the U.S., crashes and collisions on the roadways are the leading cause of death for people between the [ages of 5 and 24](#) and the cause of over [2.5 million injuries](#). Cities – along with our health professionals, our public safety workers, our transportation leaders – believe that zero is the only acceptable number of deaths on our roads. In the Road to Zero coalition, we are proud to be joined by over 900 partners to:

- Double down on what works through proven, evidence-based strategies
- Advance life-saving technology in vehicles and infrastructure
- Prioritize safety by adopting a safe-systems approach and creating a positive safety culture

Cities, like San Antonio, are leading Vision Zero efforts, but saving lives on the nation's roads is a joint responsibility. Additional funding to safety efforts that are both data-driven and corridor-driven, taking systems-based approaches, and deploying technical experts across regions could drive results.

Conclusion

In closing, this reauthorization's transportation investment could bring new mobility, connectivity and safety to our hometowns. Cities believe that Congress must continue to be a steady federal investment partner in infrastructure through the Highway Trust Fund, and it has become an economic and safety risk to not adequately fund a multimodal transportation system. We encourage Congress to set a new revenue course for the future that also course corrects our policies to leverage the innovation happening in transportation and invest in the mobility for our citizens.

Cities are ready to step up and be a true partner in these efforts. I look forward to any questions you might have.