

OPENING STATEMENT

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Committee on Science, Space, and Technology

U.S. Surface Transportation: Technology Driving the Future
Research and Technology Subcommittee Hearing

June 12, 2015

Good morning, I would like to thank the Chair for holding today's hearing.

This hearing was called to review research and development programs at the Department of Transportation and to review the relationship between the Department and non-federal entities that also conduct transportation research. Last year, almost to the day, this Committee held a hearing to examine the impact of research and technology on the future of transportation. These are very general topics and it is good to have a general overview now and then. However, I hope we will also have the opportunity to more thoroughly examine specific transportation R&D topics this Congress.

Transportation disasters have been filling the news over the last several weeks. My thoughts and prayers are with the victims and families affected by the fatal Amtrak crash in Philadelphia last month. My Dallas district and surrounding areas of North Texas were overwhelmed last month by days of heavy rains where in one night 7 inches of rain fell and shut down roads for days. With respect to pipelines, PHMSA inspectors have found that there was a 54 to 74 percent corrosion of the pipeline wall in last month's rupture that spilled 100,000 gallons of crude oil along the California coastline. In light of these recent events affecting our rails, highways, and pipelines, there are a number of technology issues on the minds of our constituents and this Congress as we consider a reauthorization of surface transportation programs.

We are living in a time that is truly transformational for all modes of transportation. When I think about the potential benefits of connected vehicle technology, I don't think it's too lofty to compare its potential impact to the impact of the Eisenhower Interstate Highway System 60 years ago on connecting goods and people across the nation. As our population grows, so too is access to public transportation and ridesharing options.

From highways, to public transportation, to railroads, research and development of innovative technologies and policies can improve the safe and efficient movement of people and freight. It is equally important to implement policies that support long-term, advanced research that will lead to revolutionary improvements to our transportation systems. To ensure a tech savvy transportation workforce, it is also important that we implement policies to incorporate transportation applications in the teaching of STEM fields. My colleagues and I must come together to support a multi-year, bipartisan surface transportation reauthorization bill that includes strong R&D provisions with adequate funding levels. I only hope that the Science, Space, and Technology Committee will take the steps necessary to ensure that we have a strong voice in what that bill looks like.

Again, I thank the witnesses for being here today and look forward to their testimony.