

Opening Statement
Ranking Member Tammy Duckworth (IL-08)
Subcommittee on Transportation and Public Assets
Hearing on “Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century (MAP-21) Program
Consolidation”
December 8, 2015

I would like to thank Chairman Mica for holding today’s hearing. As the Chairman knows, I’m still relatively new around here, and MAP-21 was enacted in 2012 prior to my arrival in Congress. This important bipartisan legislation included important provisions that consolidated surface transportation programs and mandated the use of performance management measures.

Congress has an essential oversight role in ensuring that these good government reforms are implemented properly, and I look forward to hearing from our witnesses today on the state of that implementation.

Last week, I was proud to join 358 of my colleagues in the House to pass a bipartisan long-term transportation bill, known as the “Fixing America’s Surface Transportation Act” or the “FAST Act.”

The FAST Act authorizes approximately 300 billion dollars to be invested in Federal highway and public transit projects over the next five years. Most importantly, this bipartisan Act addressed my three transportation policy priorities – it provides States and industry with certainty, it strengthens public safety and invests in innovative, multi-modal transit solutions.

When I travel home to Illinois’ 8th Congressional District, my local transportation community is constantly asking me why Washington can’t come together to compromise and develop long-term solutions. They have grown frustrated with short-term, “kick the can” Band-Aid fixes that prevent States and local governments from effectively planning long-term projects.

So, I’m pleased that Congress has worked in a bipartisan manner to craft legislation that includes five years of funding at adequate levels.

I am particularly relieved that according to the Illinois Department of Transportation, the FAST Act will provide my home State with nearly 3 billion dollars in public transit investments – the fourth highest allotment of transit funds behind only New York, California and New Jersey – and approximately 7.5 billion dollars in total highway investments – the sixth highest allotment of highway funds out of all 50 States.

However, it is important to note that the FAST Act only represents a pragmatic, bipartisan compromise – it is certainly progress – yet it is far from perfect. Indeed, as a cosponsor of the GROW AMERICA Act – which authorizes 478 billion dollars to rebuild America’s infrastructure over a six-year period – I am on record supporting a bill that would provide States with even greater levels of investment and certainty than the FAST Act.

In my view, investing in American infrastructure is the ultimate taxpayer win-win. It sustains well-paying American transportation industry jobs, and it creates new ones.

The non-partisan Congressional Budget Office has reported that investing in American infrastructure is one of most effective fiscal policy options to increase economic growth and employment.

And yet, despite our nation's crumbling system of roads and bridges, and the public's support for investing their tax dollars in local projects that create new American jobs, Congress remains unable or unwilling to dramatically increase investments in our transportation system.

Funding for the Nation's surface transportation system has been on the Government Accountability Office's high-risk list since 2007.

GAO notes that Congress transferred about 63 billion dollars in general revenues to the Highway Trust Fund between 2008 and 2014, an approach which GAO states, **quote**, "effectively ended the long-standing principle of 'users pay' in highway finance." In 2015 testimony before the Senate Finance Committee, the Congressional Budget Office estimated projected shortfalls in the highway trust fund of 168 billion dollars by 2025.

At the same time, the American Society of Civil Engineers gave America's roads a grade of "D" in its 2013 infrastructure report card.

ASCE writes that 32% of America's major roads are in poor or mediocre condition, costing motorists 67 billion dollars a year, or 324 dollars per motorist. ASCE also reports that roadway conditions are a, **quote**, "significant factor" in approximately one-third of all U.S. traffic fatalities.

In ASCE's 2014 Report Card for my home state of Illinois, the findings are just as disturbing. The report states, "Severe traffic congestion costs Illinois' economy billions of dollars in lost productivity each year. Congestion is estimated to cost \$4 billion annually for the Chicago area alone, and 42% of Illinois' major roads are in poor or mediocre condition. Driving on these roads costs Illinois motorists \$3.7 billion a year in extra vehicle repairs and operating costs."

This is unacceptable. The FAST Act is a step in the right direction, but further action is needed.

As a fellow cosponsor of the GROW AMERICA Act, I know that Ranking Member DeFazio shares my conviction that Congress should be working to dramatically increase the amount we invest in American infrastructure. I'm pleased that my colleague Congressman DeFazio, Ranking Member of the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, worked to include a provision in the FAST Act that allows for increased investment if the Highway Trust Fund balances are greater than projected.

This provision gives Congress an outstanding opportunity to expand funding beyond the amounts provided in the FAST Act, and I urge my colleagues to take full advantage of it and provide the nation with the investment in infrastructure we critically need. I look forward to working with the Chairman to monitor implementation of the new FAST Act legislation over the next five years.

In closing, I would simply note that it is my hope that over the next five years, Congress can work in a bipartisan fashion to develop a truly sustainable and long-term infrastructure solution for our nation. **Throughout history, our country's economic growth has been driven by significant infrastructure investments – from the construction of the Erie Canal in 1807, to the creation of the Transcontinental Railroad in 1869, to President Eisenhower's visionary establishment of the Interstate Highway System in the 1950s.**

It is our responsibility to preserve this proud legacy and continue making important investments that will enhance America's ability to thrive and compete well into the 21st Century.