

**HEARING ON CONSTRUCTING THE SURFACE
TRANSPORTATION REAUTHORIZATION BILL:
UNITED STATES SECRETARY
OF TRANSPORTATION'S PERSPECTIVE**

HEARING
BEFORE THE
COMMITTEE ON
ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC WORKS
UNITED STATES SENATE
ONE HUNDRED NINETEENTH CONGRESS
FIRST SESSION
APRIL 2, 2025

Printed for the use of the Committee on Environment and Public Works



Available via the World Wide Web: <http://www.govinfo.gov>

U.S. GOVERNMENT PUBLISHING OFFICE

COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC WORKS

ONE HUNDRED NINETEENTH CONGRESS

FIRST SESSION

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**HEARING ON CONSTRUCTING THE SURFACE
TRANSPORTATION REAUTHORIZATION BILL:
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WEDNESDAY, APRIL 2, 2025

U.S. SENATE,
COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC WORKS,
Washington, DC.

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:01 a.m. in room 406, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. Shelley Moore Capito (chairman of the committee) presiding.

Present: Senators Capito, Whitehouse, Cramer, Lummis, Curtis, Sullivan, Wicker, Boozman, Husted, Merkley, Markey, Kelly, Padilla, Schiff, Blunt Rochester, Alsobrooks.

**OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. SHELLEY MOORE CAPITO,
U.S. SENATOR FROM THE STATE OF WEST VIRGINIA**

Senator CAPITO. Good morning, everybody, and thank you for joining us this morning as we begin our work to develop the next Surface Transportation Reauthorization Bill. This hearing is the first of a two-part series that we are having to help us guide our work. I really want to thank Secretary Duffy for being here with us today.

My vision for this legislation is simple, but important. We want to improve the movement of people and goods. Our roads and bridges are what connect us to the people and places that matter most in our lives. They help American businesses, large and small, create jobs and economic opportunities, and enable that competitiveness in the global marketplace. They connect everything around us from Point A to Point B. Every State has transportation needs and stands to benefit from the Surface Transportation Reauthorization Bill.

My home State of West Virginia is pursuing important projects, like the Coalfields Expressway. I am specifically mentioning these in front of the Secretary, because he will be hearing from me on these two. Corridor H also, to better link our communities to essential services and economic opportunity. This legislation provides the funding and establishes the policies and programs that enable the improvement of the surface transportation network that we all so rely on.

Since the enactment of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, the Environment and Public Works (EPW) Committee has reviewed and conducted oversight of the existing poli-

cies and programs. We have learned a lot about what is working and what is not. That effort has provided me with three key principles for the next bill. By focusing on these principles, I am confident that we can work toward bipartisan legislation, as we have in the past, that will deliver results for the American people.

Principle One: improving the safety and reliability of America's surface transportation network with impactful investments. In recent years, we have seen an increase in the number and scope of Federal transportation programs. These programs have often had duplicative purposes, and project availability and eligibility. This leads to an expensive and time-intensive process to get funding out the door that disrupts the focus of Federal funding and lessens the impact that the legislation can make.

As we craft the next Surface Transportation Reauthorization Bill we must make investments that instead optimize the impact of Federal funding and give the State partners the confidence that they can invest over the longer period of time. We should focus on eliminating duplicative programs that invite regulatory overreach and increase funding for the highway formula programs that our States rely on and have a proven track record of success.

Principle Two: reforming and modernizing Federal programs and policies to increase efficiency. We all know that as currently structured, Federal requirements can add red tape that increases costs and time, and slows down the completion of projects. We all want to deliver transportation benefits faster and save money for American taxpayers.

To achieve this goal, we need to take a serious look at the Federal requirements to determine how to make meaningful improvements to our planning and procurement procedures, our environmental review processes for projects, and discretionary grants and loans requirements. By reforming and modernizing these requirements, we can create certainty for the partners who make these projects happen and ensure that the public receives the benefits of these needed investments quickly.

Principle Three: addressing the variety of surface transportation needs across all States. Obviously, different States have different needs. I would not expect West Virginia, with our mountainous peaks and valleys, to prioritize the same transportation projects in other states in other parts of our Country.

By avoiding top-down mandates from Washington, and giving States flexibility to address the individual improvements, I think that is what we need to be looking at. The bill can support our common goals while ensuring that Federal regulations, programs, and policies recognize the different needs of our States.

It will take collaboration from my Senate colleagues, our stakeholders, and the Trump administration in order to complete the bill before the IIJA, Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, expires in September 2026. We must be pragmatic and work in a bipartisan way as we have in the past to develop a Senate bill that sets us up for a productive conversation on this reauthorization effort with our colleagues in the House.

I am grateful to Secretary Sean Duffy, who is here to share the Trump administration's priorities for this legislation, and I look forward to learning more about those priorities. The Department of

Transportation's technical assistance and support will be critical parts of this process.

This is an excellent opportunity ahead of us to make a pivotal impact in our surface transportation network. Each of us knows how important that network is and the role that it plays in keeping our Country's economy and people on the move. I am excited to get to work and continue the EPW's bipartisan tradition of developing this legislation.

I want to thank our witness and the members for participating in this hearing today. I will now turn to Ranking Member Whitehouse for his statement.

**OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. SHELDON WHITEHOUSE,
U.S. SENATOR FROM THE STATE OF RHODE ISLAND**

Senator WHITEHOUSE. Thank you, Madam Chair, and welcome, Secretary Duffy. It is good to have you here.

A strong bipartisan commitment to infrastructure got us the historic Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act. Last week I attended the unveiling of the American Society of Civil Engineers' 2025 Infrastructure Report Card. We are not "A" students yet, but the report card progress, thanks to both the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and the Inflation Reduction Act, which are delivering real results across the Country.

At the start of the Biden Administration, our infrastructure was crumbling from decades of neglect. Forty-six thousands bridges were in poor condition. More than 170,000 miles of major roads were in poor condition. We had unreliable and insufficient transit systems.

The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law began turning this around with long overdue investments in roads, bridges, transit, ports, drinking water, wastewater, and other systems that are the backbone of our Nation's economy. We see this progress in Rhode Island's bridges. We have gone from 27 percent structurally deficient in 2016 to 12 percent in 2025. Like I said, not 'A' students, but progress. The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law brought nearly 100 projects closer to completion in Rhode Island alone.

As we think about the future of transportation and other infrastructure projects, it is incumbent upon us to address a big obstacle: unreasonable delay. China builds high speed rail, airports, and ports at warp speed while we tread water. Even France, long lampooned for embodying bureaucracy, builds subway and rail projects faster and at less cost than we do.

Delays take many forms. There is permitting, and I am thrilled to work with Chairman on permitting reform. There is bureaucracy, and as I have mentioned many times before, we have to manage this interagency process monster better.

To be clear, I and many of my colleagues rode the Biden Administration hard about delays of infrastructure and other projects. This is actually very often a legislative versus executive separation of powers issue, in which the executive branch hides behind interagency process, all sorts of delay, irresponsibility, non-accountability, and bad execution. We should take our oversight responsibilities seriously, no matter who is in the White House.

The most recent spate of delays afflicting infrastructure projects is the Trump freeze of INFRA, Infrastructure for Rebuilding America, Mega, Bridge Investment, and PROTECT funding. Thousands of projects are backed up, so they can be screened for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) or other mega heresies by rattled and shrunken agencies.

I want to start by thanking Chair Capito and her staff for their assistance in unsticking previously awarded funding for Rhode Island's essential Washington Bridge. Madam Chair, thank you.

Secretary Duffy, I also want to thank you for your team's work delivering the funding for a number of discretionary grants in the past week, including those Washington Bridge funds. It is a crucial project, as you know, not just for Rhode Island, but for the region. It is where you turn to head out toward the Cape.

I hope that we can rapidly deliver previously awarded funding for the array of I-95 bridges that need the work and for the Mount Hope Bridge, which I want to show. Setting aside how important it is as a piece of transit infrastructure, it is also gorgeous. It is one of the most beautiful bridges in the Country. It is 100 years old. We can extend its life. We need to get this done.

As I said in our call, Secretary, and as the Chair knows, I am eager to work on bipartisan permitting reform, and the scoping conversation with our colleagues at the Energy Committee has already begun. I am eager to do a robust bipartisan Water Resources bill and a robust bipartisan highway reauthorization. These three bills could be big. They could be transformational.

I can not do any of that while the Trump Administration blockades authorized and appropriated funds for approved projects, particularly if it blockades selectively. I can not do that if the Trump Administration violates its duty to see that bipartisan laws we pass are executed faithfully, faithfully, not with favoritism.

Mr. Secretary, the door is open in this committee to big bipartisan things for our infrastructure. I encourage you to walk through that open door.

If I may just revert to one other topic for a moment, I addressed last week the mischief and the nonsense that has surrounded the Green Infrastructure Fund. We have seen, Senator Sullivan is a former attorney general, I am a former attorney general, I am a former U.S. attorney, when you are firing career staff who disagree with you and you are proceeding with only political signatures, without any career staff who will sign, when you are getting shot down in one court and told there is no evidence for what you are saying in another court, and you are still sending Federal Bureau Investigation (FBI) agents around to harass employees, and particularly when you are making derogatory accusations of fraud and criminality, which Administrator Zeldin has done, first, it is a violation of Department of Justice (DOJ) process. Second, it is a matter of law, it is defamatory per se. It appears from the rejection by the career staff, the rejection by the magistrate judge, and the finding of no evidence by the Federal judge, that this was a knowingly defamatory set of statements made by the EPA Administrator and that acting U.S. attorney. We are going to continue to drill down into that piece of misconduct, and I will simply ask for the moment

that the article today, “EPA Hunt for Shady Deals and Gold Bars Comes up Empty” be made a matter of record for this hearing.
 Senator CAPITO. Without objection.
 [The referenced information follows:]

4/2/25, 12:06 PM

E.P.A. Hunt for Shady Deals and 'Gold Bars' Comes Up Empty - The New York Times

E.P.A. Hunt for Shady Deals and ‘Gold Bars’ Comes Up Empty

The agency head said a \$20 billion Biden climate program was marred by fraud and abuse. Documents filed for a court hearing this week don’t support that.

▶ Listen to this article • 11:18 min [Learn more](#)

By **Lisa Friedman and Claire Brown**

April 2, 2025 Updated 9:31 a.m. ET

Over the last few months, Lee Zeldin, administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, has made explosive accusations against the Biden administration, accusing it of “insane” malfeasance in its handling of \$20 billion in climate grants.

Now, as a legal battle ensues over those funds, many of Mr. Zeldin’s claims remain unsupported, and some are flat-out false.

Mr. Zeldin has said that the program, which Congress approved as part of the 2022 Inflation Reduction Act, was vulnerable to “waste, fraud, and abuse.” If that claim was substantiated, it would allow the E.P.A. to take back the \$20 billion, which was awarded to eight nonprofit groups. The money was to be used to finance projects across the country such as solar panels on community centers and geothermal systems to heat and cool subsidized housing.

But so far, the Trump administration has failed to provide evidence of wrongdoing, despite a judge’s request. The agency, which has worked to block the nonprofits from accessing the money, is now being sued by several of the organizations for breach of contract.

4/2/25, 12:06 PM

E.P.A. Hunt for Shady Deals and 'Gold Bars' Comes Up Empty - The New York Times

The parties are expected in federal court on Wednesday, and legal experts said the agency's arguments increasingly appear thin.

"It's just nonsense," said Richard Lazarus, an environmental law professor at Harvard University.

He said when he first heard about Mr. Zeldin's accusations about the \$20 billion grant program, he was shocked. Then he read the Trump administration's recent filings in federal court, which were supposed to provide evidence for its claims of fraud and abuse.

"They come in with huge press releases claiming all kinds of things, criminal misconduct, corruption, and then the documents that are filed in court don't match that rhetoric," Mr. Lazarus said. "It's completely and utterly irresponsible."

Molly Vaseliou, an E.P.A. spokeswoman, declined to discuss the case, citing pending litigation. But she said the agency's supporting documents provide a "fuller picture" than what Mr. Zeldin's critics have described.

In its most recent court filing on March 26, the E.P.A. offered another argument for canceling the grants, claiming the climate funds no longer align with the Trump administration's priorities. The money is currently frozen at Citibank, which had been selected by the Biden E.P.A. to hold the funds.

4/2/25, 12:06 PM

E.P.A. Hunt for Shady Deals and 'Gold Bars' Comes Up Empty - The New York Times



In a recent legal filing, the E.P.A. claimed it has authority to cancel the \$20 billion in grants because the climate funds no longer align with the Trump administration's priorities. Eric Lee/The New York Times

Accusations of 'gold bars'

The \$20 billion in limbo is part of a \$27 billion program Congress created in the 2022 climate law called the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund. It provided initial money for "green banks," which make loans meant to encourage solar, geothermal and other clean energy projects to reduce the burning of fossil fuels and the associated emissions that are driving climate change.

The idea behind the program was that funds would help recipients attract private investments they otherwise would not be able to get. When the loans were repaid, the money would be lent again to other projects, creating a self-perpetuating source of funding.

The size of the program, \$27 billion, was three times the E.P.A.'s annual budget. It added a new finance component to an agency that traditionally had been focused on regulating pollution.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2025/04/02/climate/lee-zeldin-gold-bars-epa.html>

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4/2/25, 12:06 PM

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Biden administration officials said they followed stringent rules when designing the program and selecting the grant recipients. Documents filed with the court show that applicants had to meet eligibility requirements, and the submissions were reviewed by hundreds of federal employees who used a scoring system to rank applications.

After the eight nonprofit groups were selected in April 2024, Citibank was chosen to disperse the funds. Under the law, the E.P.A. was required to select grantees by September 2024.

Almost immediately after he was sworn in, Mr. Zeldin called on Citibank to return the money and issued a news release saying the Trump administration had found “gold bars,” that had been “parked” at a financial institution during the Biden administration.

“Gold bars” was a reference to a hidden-camera video produced last year by Project Veritas, a right-wing group known for trying to embarrass political opponents with covert recordings.

In the video, filmed in the waning days of the Biden administration, an E.P.A. staff member compared the agency’s efforts to spend federal dollars before presidential transition to tossing “gold bars” off the Titanic.

Mr. Zeldin and the E.P.A. have repeatedly cited the video as evidence of wrongdoing.

In February, a veteran prosecutor in the U.S. Attorney’s Office for the District of Columbia, Denise Cheung, said she had resigned at the request of Ed Martin, the interim U.S. attorney appointed by President Trump, because she refused to order Citibank to freeze the funds held for the nonprofit groups. She said there was not sufficient evidence of misuse.

The Department of Justice and the F.B.I. launched an investigation into the funds, and Mr. Zeldin referred the program to his agency’s acting inspector general for a separate investigation. In mid-February, Citibank froze the nonprofits’ bank accounts at the request of the Trump administration.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2025/04/02/climate/lee-zeldin-gold-bars-epa.html>

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In mid-February at the request of the Trump administration, Citibank froze grants that had been awarded to eight nonprofit groups. Hiroko Masuike/The New York Times

Other Trump administration claims

Although it was the first time the E.P.A. used a private bank to handle financial transactions, it is a longstanding practice of the federal government. A 2016 Government Accountability Office report found that one Treasury Department bureau was using 20 financial agents at the time.

But other accusations from the Trump administration followed the freezing of the money at Citibank.

In his address to Congress in March, President Trump claimed that a nonprofit “headed up” by Stacey Abrams, a Democratic organizer and former candidate for governor in Georgia, received \$1.9 billion and called it an example of “appalling waste.”

Ms. Abrams served for one year as a senior counsel for Rewiring America, one of five nonprofit groups that were part of an umbrella organization called Power Forward Communities. Power Forward Communities was slated to receive nearly

<https://www.nytimes.com/2025/04/02/climate/lee-zeldin-gold-bars-epa.html>

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\$2 billion from the \$20 billion E.P.A. program.

Ms. Abrams did not run Rewiring America, received no money personally and had no relationship with the parent organization, Power Forward Communities' chief executive officer has said.

In a letter to his agency's acting inspector general in early March, Mr. Zeldin offered what he called "documented evidence of financial misconduct."

Mr. Zeldin noted that Power Forward Communities reported just \$100 in revenue in 2023, and questioned how an organization with such few resources could qualify for a \$2 billion grant.

But Power Forward Communities was formed expressly to apply to the E.P.A. program and was made up of well established organizations like Habitat for Humanity and United Way, in addition to Rewiring America.

In his letter, Mr. Zeldin also said the design of the program "removed \$20 billion from governmental oversight." But according to court filings, the E.P.A. could monitor transactions made through the Citibank accounts.

Mr. Zeldin also accused Jahi Wise, a former E.P.A. official who had overseen the grant program, of directing billions of dollars to his former employer, the Coalition for Green Capital. That group was one of the nonprofit organizations to receive grants.

"Corrupt at its core!" Mr. Zeldin said on the social media platform X. He accused Mr. Wise of failing to recuse himself from funding decisions.

Court filings, however, tell a different story. Mr. Wise signed two ethics pledges and both were available to Mr. Zeldin in E.P.A. files. They restricted Mr. Wise's involvement in "reviewing, evaluating, selecting or approving funds" for climate grant applicants and forbade meetings or other contact with his former employer.

Mr. Wise declined to comment. The Coalition for Green Capital did not respond to a request for comment.

The accusations of malfeasance from the Trump administration appear to depend on circular reasoning. First, an accusation of wrongdoing would appear in a conservative news outlet or on social media. Then the E.P.A. would cite a need for an investigation. And finally, the administration would use the existence of an investigation as proof of wrongdoing.

“Lee Zeldin is running an Alice in Wonderland process, hurling meritless, unsubstantiated allegations that only serve as an excuse to break the law and the legal commitments of the United States government,” said John Podesta, who served as President Biden’s climate adviser.

In its most recent court filings, the E.P.A. has argued that regardless of whether there was fraud and abuse or whether the program was designed without adequate oversight, the agency could cancel the contracts simply because the projects no longer aligned with the Trump administration’s priorities.

It has also said that the E.P.A. changed the terms of its contract with organizations “in the twilight of the prior administration” before Mr. Trump took office to make it harder for the new administration to terminate the grants for noncompliance or misconduct.

William W. Buzbee, a professor of law at Georgetown University Law Center, said changing the terms of contracts is not illegal. He said the agency’s most recent legal filings are “backpedaling from all of the more extreme accusations” regarding fraud, waste and abuse.

Nonprofits under strain

For weeks, as the grant money has remained frozen, the nonprofit recipients have struggled to continue operating. Some have raised concerns about paying employees, making office rent, and missing crucial project deadlines.

Signs of strain are beginning to emerge. United Way and Habitat for Humanity both exited Power Forward Communities, citing the need to focus on their charitable missions rather than legal battles, according to statements shared with

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The Times.

The funding freeze has also threatened the viability of local projects that had been promised loans or investments.

The Lafayette Lofts, in Clinton, Iowa, a rural community on the Mississippi River, is one such project, according to court documents. The 119-year-old building is being converted to affordable housing units. Using a loan through the green bank, the developer had hoped to install solar panels as well as a geothermal heating and cooling system — something he said traditional lenders wouldn't readily finance.

Others projects currently in limbo include a 46-home affordable rental community in Michigan intended for people recovering from addiction, a health center in New Jersey, and a solar development built on landfills that would power an auto manufacturer in Ohio.

"It's unfortunate this stuff gets caught up in politics," said Brent Crittenden, the developer of Lafayette Lofts. "Our industry moves slowly and when changes get made acutely it does make it extremely challenging."

Lisa Friedman is a Times reporter who writes about how governments are addressing climate change and the effects of those policies on communities. [More about Lisa Friedman](#)

Claire Brown covers climate change for The Times and writes for the Climate Forward newsletter. [More about Claire Brown](#)

Senator WHITEHOUSE. Thank you very much for that.

Senator CAPITO. All right, so this morning we are really honored to be joined by U.S. Transportation Secretary Sean Duffy. Secretary Duffy was approved to be Secretary of Transportation with 77 affirmative votes by the Senate, and was sworn into his office on January 28th of this year.

Prior to his service in the Cabinet, as many of us who served in the House know, he was not just a successful district attorney, but he was a member of the House of Representatives with several of us, where I had the actual privilege of serving with him on the Financial Services Committee.

Mr. Secretary, thank you again for being here. You are recognized for your opening statement.

**STATEMENT OF HON. SEAN P. DUFFY, UNITED STATES
SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION**

Mr. DUFFY. Thank you, Chairman Capito, Ranking Member Whitehouse, and members of the committee. I appreciate you all inviting me to the committee today.

Maybe if I could just first talk about the bipartisanship of this committee. Per Senator Whitehouse's comments, I think that Senator Capito has talked probably more about your projects than her own projects in West Virginia, as evidence that you all work together in a bipartisan fashion. I appreciate that, because I think infrastructure is bipartisan.

Senator SULLIVAN. Shelly, I am going to call you after this hearing.

[Laughter.]

Mr. DUFFY. I do think it is one of the unique spaces in our government where we all work together. Our roads and bridges, our airplanes or airports, the safety of our cars is a bipartisan American issue, not a red or blue issue.

My aim over the course of this hearing is to provide you a sense of the administration's priorities as we work together on surface transportation reauthorization and embark on what I hope will be the golden age of transportation. I took office just over 2 months ago, and in my first full day on the job, we experienced a sobering reminder of why the Department's top priority is and must always be safety.

While I know today's hearing is about surface transportation, I want to start by highlighting some of the steps we are taking in the immediate aftermath of the mid-air collision on the approach to DCA, Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport, because they underscore how we are going to approach our overall mission as we move forward.

The Department of Transportation has been refocused on our mission of safety. Following the mid-air collision, we swiftly restricted helicopter traffic in the vicinity of DCA and initiated a review of our Air Traffic Control work force, policies, and procedures.

At the end of February, less than a month after the fatal accident, I announced my plan to streamline the hiring process for air traffic controllers and increasing pay for new students who attend the academy. In March, following the NTSB's, National Transportation Safety Board, recommendations, I announced that the FAA

will permanently restrict non-essential helicopter operations around Ronald Reagan Airport, and eliminate mixed helicopter and fixed wing traffic.

We will continue to push for a state-of-the-art air traffic control system. I think America deserves it; America needs it. It is going to be a process that is going to take all of us working together. I look forward to sharing with you what I have seen with regard to our antiquated system. I think when we have those conversations, I think the Congress, Senate and House together, Republican and Democrat, are going to work with us, because our air traffic control system, it is using World War II aero technology. Equipment like floppy disks are commonplace in our towers.

With your help, we can propel America's aviation system into the modern era. We will do this by embracing the most advanced 21st century technology that makes our system safer, more affordable, and more efficient for all Americans. Whether taking road, rail, sea, or air, cutting unnecessary red tape, as you have mentioned, Senator Capito, and building big, beautiful infrastructure that Americans are paying for with their hard-earned dollars, that is a top priority. Let us do it efficiently. Let us cut the red tape. We can still protect the environment but let us move these projects faster.

Lawmakers on all sides of the aisle can agree that infrastructure projects are taking way too long to complete. The recent reconstruction of interstate 40, the critical Appalachian artery between North Carolina and Tennessee washed away by Hurricane Helene, demonstrates what is possible when everyone is working together. To expedite rebuilding, we found creative ways to source materials closer to the job site, saving taxpayers both time and money.

It is this kind of innovation and problem-solving that moves projects faster and more efficiently. There is so much more that we can all do together. I look forward to working with the Congress on Surface Transportation Reauthorization through the process. I appreciate you, Senator, starting these hearings early, as we are just beginning the conversation. I think in Congress sometimes we start late, but to go through regular order I think would be a real benefit for the American people.

We can make sure transportation infrastructure is built with speed and ingenuity and durability so that Americans can reap returns on their investments, not just for this generation but for generations to come.

I want to thank you all for having me, and I look forward to taking all of your questions. I yield back.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Duffy follows:]

**Constructing the Surface Transportation Reauthorization Bill:
United States Secretary of Transportation's Perspective
Testimony of Secretary of Transportation
Sean P. Duffy
Before the Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works
April 2, 2025**

Chairman Capito, Ranking Member Whitehouse, and members of the committee – thank you for inviting me to testify before you today. My aim over the course of this hearing is to provide you a sense of the Administration's priorities as we work together on surface transportation reauthorization and embark on a golden age of transportation.

I took office just over two months ago, and in my first full day on the job, we experienced a sobering reminder of why the Department's top priority is and must always be safety. While I know today's hearing is about surface transportation, I want to start by highlighting some of the steps we're taking in the immediate aftermath of the mid-air collision approaching DCA, because they exemplify how we're going to approach our overall mission moving forward.

The Department of Transportation has been refocused to be, first and foremost, a department of safety. Following the mid-air collision, we swiftly restricted helicopter traffic in the vicinity of DCA and initiated a review of our Air Traffic Control workforce, policies, and procedures. At the end of February – less than a month after the fatal accident – I announced our plan to supercharge hiring of air traffic controllers and streamlined the hiring process while raising the bar on safety and increasing pay for new controllers. In March, following the NTSB's recommendations, I announced that the FAA will permanently restrict non-essential helicopter operations around Reagan Airport, and eliminate mixed helicopter and fixed wing traffic.

It's unacceptable that the people in charge were complacent; they failed to prioritize transitioning the world's largest commercial air travel market away from World War II-era machines and antiquated equipment like floppy disks. The golden age of transportation starts with propelling American aviation into the modern era. We will do this by embracing the most advanced 21st century technology that makes our system safer, cheaper, and easier to use for all Americans.

We will bring these themes to our transportation programs – making travel by sea, rail, and road more efficient and more affordable while raising safety standards; cutting unnecessary red tape; and building the big, beautiful infrastructure that Americans are paying for with their hard-earned tax dollars.

We've already started integrating these priorities into the Department's work since January. We are aggressively revising fuel economy standards so that our Nation's hardest-working people can afford a new vehicle – a teacher should not have to pay a full year's salary just so they can have a car to get to work and teach our kids. By re-examining the inefficient and technology-forcing standards imposed by the last administration, our department is empowering more everyday Americans to purchase newer vehicles equipped with the latest state-of-the-art technology to keep our families safe. While our department looks out for the American worker, our agency has also taken emergency action to grant regulatory relief for the truck drivers hauling healthy chickens safely away from the Avian Flu that threatens our food supply.

Lawmakers on all sides of the aisle can agree that infrastructure projects are taking too long to complete. But the recent reconstruction of Interstate 40, the critical Appalachian artery in North Carolina and Tennessee washed away by Hurricane Helene, demonstrated what's possible when everyone is working together. To expedite re-building, we found creative ways to source materials closer to the job site, saving taxpayers both time and money. It is this kind of innovation and problem-solving that will unleash the golden age of transportation and pave over the fractured ruins of government inefficiency.

Before I close, Congress has expressed concerns to us about pauses in DOT funding. I want to assure you that disbursements for valid reimbursement requests under existing obligations continue as usual and were never paused. However, this Administration inherited a backlog of over 3,200 awarded projects without signed grant agreements in place. We are expediting reviews to ensure alignment with this Administration's priorities so that we can fund projects that deliver the infrastructure America so desperately needs. Between President Trump's election victory and his inauguration, the previous administration announced 940 award selections for discretionary grants totaling nearly \$9 billion – this is an *unprecedented* surge of midnight awards. As a comparison, only 103 award selections were made during the same period following the 2020 election. I assure you that my team is prioritizing the review of these award

selections. We have also taken action by releasing Notices of Funding Opportunity (NOFOs), realigning them with statutory intent and removing extraneous, ideologically driven requirements. NOFOs for important programs have been republished or are in the process of being reissued.

There's so much more to do, and I look forward to working with Congress on the surface transportation reauthorization process. We need to make sure our transportation infrastructure is built to last with speed, ingenuity, and durability so that Americans can reap returns on their investments for generations to come. Thank you, and I look forward to your questions.

Senate Committee on Environment and Public Work
Hearing Entitled, “Constructing the Surface Transportation Reauthorization Bill: United
States Secretary of Transportation’s Perspective”
April 2, 2025
Questions for the Record for Secretary Duffy

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Senator Sullivan:

Question: There are a number of paused grant awards for Alaska currently under review by the Department of Transportation, including the Ghiglione Bridge project with FHWA. Grant agreements are also pending for awarded projects in Alaska, such as the FY24 and FY25 RAISE/BUILD grants. These projects involve critical hard infrastructure, including but not limited to the Petersburg Scow Bay Haul Out Project, Wrangell Harbor Basin Revitalization and Transportation Resiliency Project, and the Realizing Equitable Accessible Connectivity initiative in Homer. These investments will benefit Alaska's rural communities, strengthen essential transportation networks, and provide much-needed infrastructure. Given the Alaska's short summer construction season, the timely release of these funds is crucial to avoid delays in starting and completing construction. Will you ensure that these important projects move forward?

Answer: Each DOT Operating Administration (OA) and Office of the Secretary (OST) Program Office is reviewing the scope of each award selection without a grant agreement in place to ensure that, to the extent consistent with law, project scopes align with Administration policy. Once reviewed, DOT will work with these recipients to finalize the terms of their grant agreement and obligate the funding. The Department acknowledges the seasonal nature of infrastructure improvements, and the importance of expeditiously moving projects.

Question: On day one, President Trump issued Executive Order (EO) 14153, "*Unleashing Alaska's Extraordinary Resource Potential*." This EO establishes that it is the policy of the United States to expedite federal permitting for projects in Alaska. Will you ensure that the Department of Transportation and participating agencies do not unnecessarily delay critical infrastructure projects—such as the DoD/MARAD-designated "strategic seaports," including the Don Young Port of Alaska—through the federal permitting process?

Answer: MARAD will execute its statutory and regulatory duties expeditiously with respect to any projects at this port.

Question: FHWA's Surface Transportation Project Delivery Program has brought efficiency and cost savings that come when states are empowered to manage their environmental reviews. However, states are still forced to navigate a separate and often duplicative review process when it comes to FTA projects—particularly for modes like ferries and railroads that are integral to Alaska's transportation network. Both FHWA and FTA fall under DOT. Do you agree that the federal government should promote intra-agency collaboration to eliminate redundancies in environmental review processes, especially those that share similar impacts or routes?

Answer: Yes, I support eliminating redundancies through interagency and intra-agency collaboration, and FHWA acknowledges the benefits of the Surface Transportation Project Delivery Program for States assuming project-level NEPA responsibilities. Approved NEPA Assignment applications are implemented through a Memorandum of

Understanding (MOU) with the State. Once a State has assumed NEPA assignment for highway projects, it may be able to assume additional responsibilities to include one or more railroad, public transportation, or multimodal projects within the State. FHWA, the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), and the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) have joint NEPA implementing regulations, and FHWA collaborates with FRA and FTA to align its MOUs to make it easier for states to enter into NEPA Assignment with those modes for transit or multimodal projects.

In addition, FHWA, FRA, and FTA follow 23 U.S.C. 139, which integrates efficiencies in the NEPA process. For major highway, transit, and rail projects (as defined by 23 U.S.C. 139(a)(7)), these provisions accelerate project delivery by calling for:

- Agencies to establish NEPA schedules with a 2-year agency-wide average for decision making;
- Concurrent environmental reviews, when consistent with law;
- Single (joint) NEPA documents when multiple Federal agencies are involved;
- Environmental Impact Statement page limits;
- All Federal authorizations be issued within 90 days of the decision unless an exception is made; and
- Agencies to establish a performance accountability system to track and report progress towards these goals.

Question: While federal funding has historically supported transportation infrastructure across the country, we must not overlook our Tribal communities—especially those in remote and rural areas like Alaska. Will you work with my office to strengthen the funding distribution for the Tribal Transportation Program?

Answer: The Tribal Transportation Program (TTP) is the largest DOT grant program dedicated to Indian Tribes. The purpose of the TTP is to provide safe and adequate transportation and public road access to and within Indian reservations, Indian lands, and Alaska Native Village communities and to contribute to the economic development, self-determination, and employment of Indians and Native Americans. The Department is committed to working with your office to ensure that TTP funding is delivered efficiently, effectively, and expeditiously to Tribes.

Senator Husted:

Question: Secretary Duffy, what steps is DOT taking to ensure that once projects– like the Brent Spence Bridge Corridor Project– are approved are completed on time and within budget?

Answer: Congress established reporting requirements in 23 U.S.C. 106(h) for States to support the successful delivery of projects with an estimated total cost of \$500 million or more, otherwise known as major projects. These include requirements for States to provide Project Management Plans (PMP) and Financial Plans (FP). The PMP includes procedures and processes to effectively manage cost, schedule, quality, and compliance with Federal requirements as well as a discussion of the roles and responsibilities of the leadership and management team. The FP is updated annually, includes detailed estimates of the costs to complete the project, and includes reasonable assumptions (as determined by the Secretary) of future increases to the costs of the project. For these projects, FHWA uses a probabilistic approach to cost estimating that considers the impacts of risk events that could impact cost and schedule and takes steps to work with the State to mitigate these risks early in the project. FHWA monitors costs and schedule closely to track progress. FHWA also reports to Congress annually on the overall cost and schedule for all projects over \$1 billion. These reports are publicly available online and can be accessed at: <https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/majorprojects/resources/>.

Question: Secretary Duffy, some state DOTs report that federal regulations apply to small, local projects the same way they do to major interstate construction. Would you support exempting smaller projects from excessive red tape and oversight?

Answer: Yes, this Administration believes there are efficiencies that could be gained by streamlining burdensome processes, where appropriate, for small local projects. We welcome dialogue on efficiencies that could be included in the next surface transportation reauthorization bill.

Ranking Member Whitehouse:

Question: The IIJA includes programs that address climate change *in statute*, and yet your review still calls for a project-by-project review of awards from such programs for potential removal or cancellation.

Please confirm whether you are conducting a project-by-project review for each of the following programs, and please explain what you aim to identify through this project-by-project review: 1) PROTECT program, 2) Reduction of truck emissions at port facilities, 3) Carbon reduction program, 4) Congestion relief program, and 5) Grants for charging and fueling infrastructure.

Answer: The Department is quickly reviewing ALL projects selected through competitive grant programs that do not have a signed grant agreement in place to confirm they comply with Administration policy. This includes, but is not limited to, the competitive grant programs you identified. Once projects have been reviewed, DOT will work with recipients to finalize the terms of their grant agreement and obligate the funding.

The Carbon Reduction program is an apportioned formula program and continues to be available for obligation by states. The apportioned formula funding for the PROTECT program also continues to be available for obligation by states. These formula programs are not subject to a project-by-project review.

Question: I appreciate your commitment, expressed at the hearing, to implement the National Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (NEVI) formula program in full, by deploying charging infrastructure around the country, in spite of the misguided and unlawful executive orders to the contrary. I also share your view that the pace of deployment of funds from the NEVI program has been frustratingly slow. You appear, however, to be addressing this slowness with further delay and bureaucratic process, calling for an abrupt halt to funding under the program and retracting approval of plans that states previously developed and submitted.

When will you issue updated guidance for the program? What assistance have you provided or offered to those states as recourse for contracts disrupted by your February 6 halt on new obligations of NEVI funding?

Answer: The Department notes that the Fiscal Year 2026 President's Budget proposes cancelling \$5.7 billion in Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) funding provided to the Department of Transportation for failed electric vehicle charger grant programs. FHWA initially stated that it aimed to have updated draft NEVI Formula Guidance published for public comment this spring. FHWA continues to work diligently to release the revised guidance for public comment, and anticipates doing so in the very near future. FHWA plans to subsequently publish final guidance that responds to the comments received. FHWA Division Offices are available to provide assistance to State DOTs on the NEVI Program as needed.

Question: Climate change is accelerating rates of corrosion in our infrastructure by increasing levels of humidity in the atmosphere. While humidity is not a new phenomenon, scientific evidence points to increased levels of humidity as a consequence of rising temperatures. Another consequence of climate change is the increase in the frequency and severity of extreme weather events. Research also finds that climate change will impose hundreds of millions of dollars in additional costs to keep our bridges safe. In applying for federal funding from the Department of Transportation, the Rhode Island Turnpike and Bridge Authority provided details on the established connections linking climate change to the need to urgent need to repair the Mt. Hope Bridge and to equip the bridge with a dehumidification system to protect the weight-bearing cables.

Do you find any fault with applications for federal infrastructure funding citing the links between climate change and increased levels of humidity as a key contributing factor in the project's purpose and need? Do you have any disputes with the finding that increased humidity is associated with accelerated corrosion of infrastructure? Is it your intention to delay grant agreements, such as for the Mt. Hope Bridge project, in order to remove language related to climate change from project documents?

Answer: Resilience of critical infrastructure from recurring damage related to weather events is important to maintaining a state of good repair. The Department is quickly reviewing all projects selected through competitive grant programs that do not have a signed grant agreement in place to confirm they comply with Administration policy as consistent with law, including the Mt. Hope Bridge project. Once reviewed, DOT will work with recipients to finalize the terms of their grant agreement and obligate the funding.

Question: Last month, your office called for an additional layer of review of all competitive grant awards that are awaiting a finalized grant agreement, and this review calls out bicycle infrastructure for potential cancellation of funding. Eliminating funding for bicycle infrastructure follows the policy prescriptions of Project 2025.

In your view, how does bicycle infrastructure contravene the policies of your Department and the Trump Administration? Which specific executive orders and policy memos issued since January, as well as specific sections of such orders and memos, prompted you to target bicycle infrastructure for cancellation?

Answer: Safety is the Department of Transportation's top priority. In the last administration, bicycling and bicycle lanes were placed at a higher priority than achieving other transportation related goals, such as reducing congestion or adding capacity. I support projects that safely and efficiently move people and goods on our transportation network, and we are refocusing our attention to better align transportation infrastructure to align with those of communities and the traveling public, rather than forcing bike lanes into projects where they don't fit or make sense.

To maximize the efficient use of federal funding, consistent with the program requirements approved by Congress, we are reviewing grant projects that have not been executed to ensure the projects support the President's priorities, advance safety, reduce congestion, and make sure these project costs, activities, and timelines comply with all applicable Federal laws and regulations.

Question: FHWA recognized bike lanes and separated bike lanes as proven safety countermeasures in 2015. In fact, FHWA found that separated bike lanes reduce crashes by 49% on urban 4-lane undivided collectors (and not just bicycle-involved crashes). Given your strong emphasis on safety in your appearances before Congress this year, why are you seeking to cancel funding for bicycle infrastructure or remove bicycle infrastructure components from projects?

Answer: Safety is the Department of Transportation's top priority. In the last administration, bicycling and bicycle lanes were placed at a higher priority than achieving other transportation-related goals, such as reducing congestion or adding capacity. I support projects that safely and efficiently move people and goods on our transportation network, and we are refocusing our attention to better align transportation infrastructure with achieving these goals for communities and the traveling public, rather than forcing bike lanes into projects where they don't fit or make sense.

To maximize the efficient use of Federal funding, consistent with the program requirements approved by Congress, we are reviewing grant projects that have not been executed to ensure the projects support the President's priorities, advance safety, reduce congestion, and make sure these project costs, activities, and timelines comply with all applicable Federal laws and regulations.

Question: In an alarming number of instances, federal employees around the country have heard that their leased office space will not be renewed, including spaces used by the Department of Transportation.

Please provide a list of FHWA office spaces that you do not plan to renew. What is your plan for FHWA office space and the employees that use them after those leases expire?

Answer: The Department is working with FHWA to review its real property portfolio to identify space reduction or consolidation opportunities that align with the Administration's goal of eliminating underutilized space, while ensuring FHWA maintains a real property presence that will allow the agency to continue to carry out its mission.

Question: What do you see are the benefits from having both a close working relationship and close physical proximity among FHWA Division offices and state transportation agencies?

Answer: Safety is the Department's top priority. In support of that mission, FHWA and State DOTs collaborate closely as they work together to build and maintain a world-class transportation system.

The benefits of close field proximity include enabling FHWA to provide on-the-ground project delivery assistance, hands-on resources, oversight, technical assistance, and many other highway transportation and safety services; the costs of field proximity must be considered along with its benefits, with the goal of delivering Federal highway programs in the most efficient and effective manner possible.

Question: Will you commit to maintaining FHWA Division offices in each state?

Answer: The Department is committed to making the most efficient use of Federal resources while maintaining the collaborative and effective nature of the federally assisted, State-administered Federal-aid Highway Program.

Senator Sanders:

Question: The Department of Transportation ordered a pause and project-by-project review of all competitive awards with unobligated or partially obligated grant agreements. This review could impact over \$180 million in grants previously announced for Vermont. This includes funding for critical bridge replacements and road safety improvements.

The State of Vermont was awarded a 2022 RAISE Grant to replace the Winooski River Bridge and has a signed grant agreement for this project. The current bridge, which provides transit for approximately 25,000 vehicles per day, was constructed in 1928. What is the status of the review of this grant, which is already partially obligated?

Answer: Competitive grant awards with existing signed grant agreements are moving forward, including the Winooski River Bridge Project awarded through the RAISE program. The Department continues to reimburse grant recipients for eligible costs incurred.

Question: The State of Vermont was awarded a Rural Surface Transportation Grant to replace a bridge in the Town of Readsboro. The current bridge was constructed in 1954, and the project is already under contract and going to construction this summer. What is the status of the review of this grant?

Answer: The project was awarded Rural FY 2025 funds. The Department is quickly reviewing all other projects selected through competitive grant programs that do not have a signed grant agreement in place to confirm they comply with current Administration priorities and Executive Orders. This includes the grant to the Town of Readsboro. Once reviewed, DOT will work with recipients to finalize the terms of their grant agreement and obligate the funding.

Question: The Town of Killington was awarded a 2024 RAISE Grant to improve sidewalks, roads, and water infrastructure. What is the status of the review of this grant?

Answer: The Department is quickly reviewing all projects selected through competitive grant programs that do not have a signed grant agreement in place to confirm they comply with current Administration priorities and Executive Orders. This includes the grant to the Town of Killington. Once reviewed, DOT will work with recipients to finalize the terms of their grant agreement and obligate the funding.

Question: The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act requires that every state receives at least one large bridge grant or two small bridge grants under the Discretionary Grant Bridge Investment Program. Vermont has not yet received grants to fulfill this requirement. Will you commit to ensuring that that every state receives at least one large bridge grant or two small bridge grants under the Discretionary Grant Bridge Investment Program, as is required by law?

Answer: The Department intends to fulfill the requirements of the Bridge Investment Program as established by Congress in the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), including priority consideration for an eligible and justified project in a State for which two or more applications for eligible projects within the State were submitted for the current fiscal year and an average of two or more applications for eligible projects within the State were submitted in prior fiscal years of the program, and fewer than two grants have been awarded for eligible projects within the State under the program.

Question: Will you commit to ensuring that funding in the next surface transportation reauthorization legislation passed by Congress into law is administered and disbursed in a timely manner?

Answer: DOT operates in accordance with the law and the direction set out by Congress. The Department looks forward to working with Congress on the upcoming reauthorization.

Question: Vermont has seen severe infrastructure damage from recurring major flood events in recent years. In 2024, there were 27 disaster events with losses exceeding \$1 billion each in the United States. This is the second-most on record, beat only by 28 such events in 2023.

Do you think that the impacts of climate change will require additional investments in public infrastructure?

Answer: Federal-aid highway programs provide the ability for recipients to build resiliency into highway infrastructure. The Emergency Relief program, authorized through 23 U.S.C. 125, provides funding to repair infrastructure damaged from natural disasters or catastrophic failures from external causes and includes eligibilities to incorporate economically justified protective features into projects that mitigate the risk of recurring damage or the cost of future repair from extreme weather, flooding, and other natural disasters.

Question: Do you think that the next surface transportation reauthorization legislation should invest in programs that aim to mitigate the effects of climate change?

Answer: The Administration has not yet formulated a reauthorization proposal.

Question: Do you think that the next surface transportation reauthorization legislation should invest in programs that aim to reduce the impact of specific natural disasters, such as flooding, in communities?

Answer: The Administration has not yet formulated a reauthorization proposal.

Question: The Vermont Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) office's lease was previously listed on DOGE.gov as a savings source but is not currently listed. Please clarify the current and future status of the FHWA lease in Montpelier, Vermont.

Answer: The FHWA Vermont Division lease is currently active and set to expire on September 30, 2026, and FHWA is currently working with GSA on future plans.

Senator Markey:

Question: The Federal Highway Administration is responsible for many critical grant programs and has roughly 2,800 employees. But over 300 of those employees either accepted the buyout offer or were probationary employees that the administration has tried to fire. That's over 10 percent of the Federal Highway Administration's workforce. How will those reductions impact the administration's ability to review grant applications, sign grant agreements, and get money out the door?

Answer: FHWA will conduct a review to address any impacts to program and project delivery from the deferred resignation program.

Question: On January 29, you signed a memo that directed the Department of Transportation to "give preference to communities with marriage and birth rates higher than the national average." Can you explain the rationale for this preference?

Answer: On January 29, 2025, the Department of Transportation (DOT) issued DOT Order 2100.7, "Ensuring Reliance Upon Sound Economic Analysis in Department of Transportation Policies, Programs, and Activities." The Order resets the principles and standards for DOT's policies, programs, and activities to mandate reliance on rigorous economic analysis and positive cost-benefit calculations. Among other things, to the extent appropriate and consistent with law, the Order prefers projects in communities with marriage and birth rates higher than the national average to prioritize funding in areas where population growth necessitates transportation funding, and where such funding will benefit families and communities by providing increased access to transportation that will help families and communities improve the quality of their lives, raise their standard of living, or enable them to participate more fully in our economy.

Question: Last year, communities were ravaged by Hurricane Helene and Milton, creating an estimated \$500 billion in total damages and economic losses. If we are to rebuild, like I-40 in North Carolina and Tennessee, we must plan for durability and longevity. Do you agree that state DOTs have to consider durability and resiliency when planning projects?

Answer: State DOTs follow nationally recognized design standards. FHWA requires specific design standards for infrastructure on the National Highway System (NHS). State DOTs are required to develop asset management plans that include lifecycle cost and risk management analyses, both of which must take into consideration extreme weather and resilience under 23 U.S.C. 119(e).

Question: Standing up a national charging network—especially in rural and underserved areas—takes time. The Biden administration itself projected that full deployment would span five years. To date, \$3.3 billion in funding has been allocated to states, 38 states have issued awards, 15 states have at least one operational station, and over 1,000 charging stations are in the pipeline.

Actions to ensure electric vehicle charging infrastructure funding is efficiently deployed is one thing. But freezing funding midstream, without a clear statutory basis, threatens to derail state-led planning and delay private investment.

Under what authority did the Department of Transportation suspend these funds? What is your plan to fulfill the congressional mandate for the National Electric Vehicle Infrastructure program and Charging and Fueling Infrastructure program to build out equitable EV charging access nationwide?

Answer: As indicated in the February 6, 2025, memo to State Department of Transportation Directors, the NEVI Formula Program is unique in that this Program requires the Secretary to approve a plan for each State describing how the State intends to use its NEVI funds. The NEVI Formula Program requires the Secretary to approve each State's plan prior to the obligation of NEVI Formula Program funds for each fiscal year. The Department is reviewing the policies underlying the implementation of the NEVI Formula Program. Accordingly, the NEVI Formula Program Guidance dated June 11, 2024, and all prior versions of this guidance, are rescinded. As result of the rescission of the NEVI Formula Program Guidance, FHWA also immediately suspended the approval of all State Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Deployment plans for all fiscal years. FHWA initially stated that it aimed to have updated draft NEVI Formula Guidance published for public comment this spring. FHWA continues to work diligently to release the revised guidance for public comment, and anticipates doing so in the very near future. FHWA plans to subsequently publish final guidance that responds to the comments received. Reimbursement of existing obligations will continue. The Department notes that approximately 84 percent of these funds were unobligated and that the Fiscal Year 2026 President's Budget proposes cancelling \$5.7 billion in Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) funding provided to the Department of Transportation for failed electric vehicle charger grant programs.

As for other competitive grant programs, the Department is working to review grant agreements for consistency with all Executive Orders, as consistent with law.

Senator Padilla:

Question: On February 20, 2025, the U.S. Department of Transportation initiated a review of the California High-Speed Rail Authority (CHSRA). Despite being one of the most heavily audited public works projects in the country, CHSRA has welcomed DOT's engagement in their high-speed rail project. However, the scope and specifics of the review have been unclear, and more clarity is critical to ensuring the legitimacy of this review.

What basis or bases did you have for initiating a compliance review audit of the Federal-State Partnership grant less than a year from execution of the project agreement?

Answer: The CHSRA Inspector General published a report on February 3, 2025, that reviewed the Merced-Bakersfield segment of the project and found CHSRA's schedule may not accurately account for current conditions and risks. FRA has been seeking additional information to evaluate CHSRA's performance and ability to perform under the FRA-administered funding agreements.

Question: What basis or bases did you have for initiating a compliance review audit of the Fiscal Year 2010 grant less than a year from execution of the project agreement?

Answer: The grant was obligated in 2009. The grant agreement was most recently amended in November 2024 to extend the period of performance yet again. The period of performance originally ended in 2018; and now extends to 2030. The CHSRA Inspector General published a report on February 3, 2025, shortly after extending the period of performance of the grant, that reviewed the Merced-Bakersfield segment of the project and found CHSRA's schedule may not accurately account for current conditions and risks.

Question: What is the basis for concluding that work completed after February 20 was "at risk," and do either of the grant agreements provide that work conducted after the initiation of a compliance audit is "at risk"?

Answer: The CHSRA Inspector General published a report on February 3, 2025, that reviewed the Merced-Bakersfield segment of the project and found CHSRA's schedule may not accurately account for current conditions and risks. FRA has been seeking additional information to evaluate CHSRA's performance and ability to perform under the FRA-administered funding agreements. FRA's February 20 letter to CHSRA does not make any conclusions with respect to work completed after February 20, but serves to notify CHSRA of FRA's intent to initiate a compliance review. As per the FRA grant agreements' terms and conditions and consistent with the Office of Management and Budget's guidance (2 CFR part 200), FRA reserves the right to take action to remedy any non-compliance, including disallowing costs.

Question: Do the Office of Management and Budget regulations at 2 CFR Part 200 provide that work conducted after the initiation of a compliance audit is “at risk”?

Answer: As per the FRA grant agreements’ terms and conditions, and consistent with the Office of Management and Budget’s guidance (2 CFR part 200), FRA make take appropriate remedies, including disallowing costs, to remedy recipient noncompliance. FRA’s February 20 letter to CHSRA serves to notify CHSRA of FRA’s intent to initiate a compliance review.

Question: What process will you provide to ensure that the compliance review is fact-based and consistent with the grant agreements?

Answer: FRA is conducting the review in coordination with CHSRA. FRA has requested documentation from CHSRA, provided CHSRA with opportunities to respond to and seek clarification on FRA’s document requests. FRA’s compliance review team has regularly met with CHSRA staff.

Question: What regulations are USDOT or FRA relying on for the execution of this audit?

Answer: As stated in FRA’s February 20 letter to CHSRA, FRA initiated this compliance review consistent with the terms and conditions of cooperative agreements FR-HSR-0118-12 (the “FY10 Agreement”) and 69A36524521070FSPCA (the “FSP Agreement”). Both agreements incorporate applicable federal law, including the Office of Management and Budget’s guidance (2 CFR part 200).

Question: What guidance documents are FRA relying on for its execution of this audit?

Answer: FRA initiated this compliance review consistent with the terms and conditions of cooperative agreements FR-HSR-0118-12 (the “FY10 Agreement”) and 69A36524521070FSPCA (the “FSP Agreement”).

Question: USDOT and FRA have a long-standing tradition of working cooperatively to ensure compliance with grant agreements to keep grants and projects on track. Do you commit to continuing this practice, and if not, what is the basis for breaking this longstanding tradition?

Answer: As stewards of taxpayer dollars, FRA and the Department are committed to ensuring the responsible use of federal funds consistent with Congress’s statutory direction, the terms and conditions of FRA’s grant agreements, and applicable federal law.

Question: What criteria will USDOT apply to determine compliance with the terms of the grant

agreements and OMB regulations, and do you commit to applying only those criteria?

Answer: FRA is conducting its review consistent with the terms and conditions of cooperative agreements FR-HSR-0118-12 (the “FY10 Agreement”) and 69A36524521070FSPCA (the “FSP Agreement”) and the Office of Management and Budget’s guidance (2 CFR part 200).

Question: Has FRA initiated any compliance audits for any other grants for rail projects since January 20, 2025? If so, what are they and how was the decision made to focus on those grants? If not, why have FRA and USDOT singled out California High Speed Rail for unique treatment?

Answer: FRA has not initiated any additional compliance reviews since January 20, 2025. The CHSRA Inspector General published a report on February 3, 2025, that reviewed the Merced-Bakersfield segment of the project and found CHSRA’s schedule may not accurately account for current conditions and risks. As such, FRA has undertaken an effort to review and determine whether the CHSRA has and will follow through on the commitments it made to receive billions of dollars in federal funding. FRA routinely monitors projects through its oversight of the agency’s funding programs.

Question: This Administration has pledged to improve the economic conditions for Americans by prioritizing American jobs and products. Over 1,500 people are dispatched daily to work on good-paying construction jobs on this project and nearly \$22 billion of economic activity has been provided by construction in the Central Valley of California. The project must comply with Buy America requirements, which supports U.S. manufacturing. Are you committed to keeping these people at work and these economic benefits flowing by working together with the CHSRA in good faith to see the Initial Central Valley Section through to completion? Have you considered the adverse economic impact of putting these project agreements for California’s high-speed rail at risk?

Answer: As stewards of taxpayer dollars, FRA and the Department are committed to ensuring the responsible use of federal funds consistent with Congress’s statutory direction, the terms and conditions of FRA’s grant agreements, and applicable federal law. FRA’s review is focused on ensuring its award recipients comply with the grant terms and conditions and applicable federal law.

Question: Since the establishment of the interstate highway system, the federal government has been a reliable partner to help advance critical transportation projects. The recent freeze in projects has created significant uncertainty, including among those who receive federal formula funds. For example, the San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge “State of Good Repair Project” is depending on \$119 million in Bridge Formula Program funds. The Project includes rehabilitating the ship collision protection fenders on the West Span of the Bay Bridge that prevent damage in the event of a strike by a container ship. This is just one of hundreds of projects in our state that rely on formula funding.

Can you commit to the record whether cities and metropolitan planning organizations will be able to rely on consistent and timely formula funding to advance their projects?

Answer: Yes, FHWA and the Department are committed to ensuring that States, cities, and metropolitan planning organizations can rely on consistent and timely formula funding to advance their projects. FHWA issued a notice of apportioned Federal-aid highway program formula funding available to the States for obligation for Fiscal no Year (FY) 2025 on October 1, 2024, and will issue a notice for FY 2026 formula funding in October 2025, consistent with the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act. New obligations of formula funding have continued to proceed without interruption (except National Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (NEVI) formula funding for which the resumption of obligations is pending updated program guidance and the subsequent approval of revised State NEVI plans).

Specifically, FHWA also issued a notice of apportioned Bridge Formula Program funding available to the States for obligation for FY 2025 on October 1, 2024, including more than \$574 million to California. You can find this notice at <https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/legregs/directives/notices/n4510894.cfm>.

Question: As this Committee embarks on the upcoming Surface Transportation Reauthorization, it is critical to ensure that taxpayer dollars do not support foreign adversaries' surveillance of the United States and our critical infrastructure. One technology that deserves careful deployment is light detection and ranging (LiDAR). LiDAR sensors—which allow for precise, accurate, and rapid three-dimensional measurements—have the ability to collect a vast amount of information on U.S. critical infrastructure, geography, and human behaviors. In January 2024, the Department of Defense named the leading Chinese LiDAR manufacturer, Hesai, a “Chinese Military Company” operating in the United States. Furthermore, in May 2024, the Congressional Research Service found that Chinese firms were developing LiDAR sensors for “Smart Cities” applications that China could use “to acquire sensitive information or exquisite mapping of U.S. infrastructure” or “introduce malware via a software update and degrade the performance of systems using the technology.” Chinese LiDAR companies have flooded the U.S. market with heavily subsidized LiDAR sensors and have targeted sales to state and local governments for applications using federal funds. This is similar to the playbook we saw with drones—creating an unfair playing field that threatens domestic LiDAR manufacturing capacity and puts our security at risk.

Do you agree that taxpayer funds should not go to Chinese military companies, such as LiDAR manufacturers?

Answer: The Department is certainly aware of these national security concerns. LiDAR is an increasingly-essential element of Advanced Driver Assistance Systems (ADAS) and Automated Driving System (ADS) systems. China holds approximately 60% of the global market for automotive LiDAR, and LiDAR is increasingly being used to collect detailed information for infrastructure planning, design, construction and maintenance. We note that China has proposed and continues to review a technology export ban on

LiDAR from China.

The Department does not set procurement rules or guidance outside of the Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) or of requirements contained in legislation. The Department implements all requirements of the FAR and of guidance and direction provided by cognizant Departments and Agencies (e.g., Department of Commerce/Bureau of Industry and Security regulations, Federal Communications Commission ban on certain equipment authorizations, FY19 National Defense Authorization Act Section 889). The Department's implementation of such requirements and guidance is limited to Federal contracts and covered subcontractors; the Department has no authority to prohibit the operation, procurement, or contracting for LiDAR equipment beyond Federally-owned or -contracted assets, and cannot issue such prohibition to recipients of Federal financial assistance (grants) or to the private sector.

The Department will implement any Congressional action addressing this matter, and any FAR changes, BIS determination, or similar guidance.

Senator Schiff:

Question: Regarding potential reductions in force at the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT):

Do you have any reduction in force (RIF) plans for agencies within U.S. DOT? If so, which modal agencies would be affected, and approximately how many employees would be impacted?

Answer: DOT is currently assessing the impacts from the offering of the third round of the deferred resignation program. (Please note: the third round was only offered to the US Merchant Marine Academy.) DOT will make decisions on RIFs after determining program impacts from the deferred resignation program. DOT's plan is subject to the preliminary injunction issued on May 22, 2025 by the District Court for the Northern District of California. The Administration has asked the Supreme Court to stay the preliminary injunction. DOT's plan is currently on hold given the pending litigation.

Question: In the event of any reductions in force at U.S. DOT, do you anticipate that this will affect timelines for projects that have been awarded grant funds or the Department's ability to meet its objectives?

Answer: As part of DOT's restructuring effort, the Department is pursuing opportunities to identify efficiencies to the grants management process and has taken steps to proactively address the prior Administration's backlog of award selections that have not yet been fully obligated. DOT does not anticipate an impact to the timelines for successful administration of grant funding.

Question: Should any reduction in force impact project timelines or U.S. DOT's ability to administer its programs effectively, what measures or steps would the Department take to mitigate these effects and remedy the impact?

Answer: DOT is currently assessing the impact of the second round of the deferred resignation program before taking additional action with reductions in force. This assessment will help mitigate impacts to mission and project delivery.

Question: President Donald Trump's Jan. 20 "Unleashing American Energy" Executive Order halted disbursement of IIJA and Inflation Reduction Act funds while federal agencies examine projects for compliance with his policy agenda. However, you stated during the hearing that you're "not going to hold up any projects."

Will obligated projects under the Promoting Resilient Operations for Transformative, Efficient, and Cost-saving Transportation (PROTECT) and National Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (NEVI) programs move forward and receive grant funds?

Answer: Reimbursements for all existing obligations of funding administered by FHWA, including obligations of PROTECT and NEVI formula programs funding, have continued to proceed without interruption. With respect to any new obligations of formula funds, the NEVI Formula Program requires the Secretary to approve each State's plan prior to the obligation of NEVI Formula Program funds for each fiscal year. The Department has decided to review the policies underlying the implementation of the NEVI Formula Program; therefore, all prior versions of FHWA's NEVI Formula Program Guidance have been rescinded and approval of State Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Deployment plans has been suspended at this time. FHWA initially stated that it aimed to have updated draft NEVI Formula Guidance published for public comment this spring. FHWA continues to work diligently to release the revised guidance for public comment, and anticipates doing so in the very near future. FHWA plans to subsequently publish final guidance that responds to the comments received. Grant programs are currently undergoing review. The Department notes that the Fiscal Year 2026 President's Budget proposes cancelling \$5.7 billion in Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) funding provided to the Department of Transportation for failed electric vehicle charger grant programs.

Question: If any U.S. DOT programs or projects selected for grants are determined to be in conflict with the President's Executive Orders, how does your agency plan to move forward?

Answer: Many projects may move forward with no scope changes. DOT may request that applicants of other projects remove or revise certain aspects of the projects, to the extent consistent with law, and may need to consider other projects further before determining how to proceed.

Question: Is U.S. DOT planning to renegotiate existing contracts for projects deemed to be in conflict with the President's Executive Orders?

Answer: The Department is actively undertaking a review of existing contracts to identify and address any elements that may be in a conflict with the President's Executive Orders. Where legally permissible, the Department is proceeding with renegotiations or issuing unilateral modifications of contract terms and conditions. These actions are being conducted in close consultation with legal counsel to ensure adherence to applicable laws and to maintain transparency and accountability in the implementation of new directives.

Question: If a project that has been selected for a grant is awaiting a grant agreement, approximately how much time will it take for that project to hear from U.S. DOT staff about the status of the award and/or next steps?

Answer: DOT is moving as expeditiously as possible, but this review will take time. DOT is approving projects for obligation on a rolling basis as reviews are completed.

Question: You have expressed the opinion that the Biden Administration imposed additional and unnecessary rules or requirements on IJA's transportation programs that were not consistent with Congressional intent. How does U.S. DOT's new policy regarding high marriage and birth rates align with Congressional intent for these transportation programs?

Answer: DOT Order 2100.7 does not alter statutory requirements under the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act. Rather, to the extent appropriate and consistent with law, DOT prefers projects meeting statutory requirements in communities with marriage and birth rates higher than the national average to prioritize funding in areas where population growth necessitates transportation funding, and where such funding will benefit families and communities by providing increased access to transportation that will help families and communities improve the quality of their lives, raise their standard of living, or enable them to participate more fully in our economy.

Senator Blunt Rochester:

Question: Kent County in Delaware experienced 21,804 total reportable crashes between 2019-2023. This includes 115 fatal crashes, 21 of which were bikes and pedestrians, and 4,846 personal injury crashes. To limit these tragic incidents, Kent County received funding from the Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A) program to support the Dover Kent Metropolitan Planning Organization's Comprehensive Safety Action Plan. This plan will better identify roadways in the county that have the greatest incidents of severe crashes and prioritize safety improvements. However, given the Department of Transportation's internal memo on the review of grant-funded projects, I want to reconfirm the future of this project. Can you commit to advancing and providing future funding for life-saving projects like this through competitive grant programs like RAISE and SS4A?

Answer: The Department is quickly reviewing all projects selected through competitive grant programs that do not have a signed grant agreement in place to confirm they comply with Administration policy consistent with law. This includes the Kent County projects. Once reviewed, DOT will work with recipients to finalize the terms of their grant agreement and obligate the funding.

This Administration is committed to advancing safety, including in Delaware, and we look forward to seeing competitive applications come from Delaware for the current round of SS4A funding, and future funding opportunities.

Question: In Delaware, local governments, community stakeholders, and regional planning organizations spend significant time and resources to develop competitive grant applications that best reflect the needs of our community. This process requires public input, technical analysis, and a rigorous review of local and national safety infrastructure goals to ensure that every project will be successful should federal funding come through. Given the Department's actions to reconsider or pause awards that have already been awarded, I am concerned that this sets a precedent that will allow the federal government to override locally driven priorities. What assurances do state, regional, and local communities have that the federal government will uphold its commitment to these locally driven projects?

Answer: The Department values the time and resources that state, regional, and local partners invest in developing competitive grant applications. The Department is quickly reviewing all projects selected through competitive grant programs that do not have a signed grant agreement in place to confirm they comply with Administration policy consistent with law. Once reviewed, DOT will work with recipients to finalize the terms of their grant agreement and obligate the funding.

Question: Delaware and local communities rely on formula funding to advance critical transportation projects. Is there any risk of the availability or timing of these formula funds, and can states rely on the availability of these funds to advance future planning and transportation projects?

Answer: States and local communities can continue utilizing available formula funding to advance critical transportation projects. The FY 2026 Budget fully supports apportioned formula program contract authority and obligation limitation levels for FY 2026 authorized by the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act. FHWA issued a notice of apportioned Federal-aid highway program formula funding available to the States for obligation for Fiscal Year (FY) 2025 on October 1, 2024, and will issue a notice for FY 2026 formula funding in October 2025, consistent with the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act. New obligations of formula funding have continued to proceed without interruption (except National Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (NEVI) formula funding for which the resumption of obligations is pending updated program guidance and the subsequent approval of revised State NEVI plans).

Senator Alsobrooks:

Question: The Maryland Department of Transportation won a \$33.1 million award from the Low Carbon Transportation Materials Program in December. However, the Department of Transportation has not yet executed the grant agreement. The project will accelerate the adoption of low-carbon materials for construction projects in Maryland. This would create manufacturing jobs in the state while meeting our climate goals. Do you support the Low Carbon Transportation Materials program and other programs like it that help bolster our economy while lowering our carbon footprint? Will you work with me to ensure that Maryland gets this critical funding as expeditiously as possible?

Answer: The Low-Carbon Transportation Materials (LCTM) Program provides \$2 billion to State DOTs and other eligible applicants for the use of construction materials that have substantially lower levels of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. In November, the Maryland State Highway Administration was one of 39 State DOTs awarded a total of \$1.2 billion to fund activities to identify, verify, and use eligible materials for eligible construction projects. The Department is actively working to review selections for consistency with Administration policy as consistent with law and advise recipients regarding next steps for implementing the LCTM Program.

Question: Despite significant federal investment, 42,000 individuals lost their lives on our roadways last year and rising crash severity continues to increase costs for American families – costs like insurance premiums. How is the Department of Transportation ensuring that every dollar intended to improve safety outcomes actually delivers measurable improvements, particularly in high-risk areas? Is the Department considering the use of new technologies to achieve better safety outcomes? Please elaborate.

Answer: The Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP), authorized under 23 U.S.C. 148, provides dedicated funding to improve safety outcomes and includes specific requirements that help the Department ensure that every dollar delivers measurable improvements in high-risk areas. The Department, through FHWA, provides stewardship and oversight of HSIP by providing guidance and technical resources to support improved State decision-making and evaluation of safety outcomes, and providing oversight to ensure States are meeting the requirements outlined in the legislation.

New technologies have the potential to deliver safety improvements at scale. FHWA is looking at Intersection Safety System prototyping efforts to transform intersection safety. This involves an innovative application of emerging technologies including machine vision, sensor fusion, and real-time decision making to identify and mitigate unsafe conditions involving vehicles, pedestrians, and bicyclists.

Another promising technology is Vehicle-to-everything (V2X). V2X is a comprehensive transportation communication network for vehicles, devices, and systems to accommodate trusted and timely sharing of information to enable improved transportation decision-making. The shared information includes road conditions, potential crash conflicts, approaching infrastructure, and presence of other roadway users.

V2X allows people inside and outside vehicles to virtually “see” each other and objects before they can be seen physically.

Question: The freight industry is crucial to Maryland’s economy, supporting various sectors from healthcare to manufacturing. In Maryland, the freight industry directly supports jobs and generates revenue, with the Port of Baltimore alone creating 15,000 jobs and generating \$4.7 billion for the state. The success of freight in Maryland depends on a well-functioning transportation network – from roads and railways to ports, and airports – allowing for the efficient movement of goods. Will the Department prioritize funding for critical connections between ports, highways, and distribution centers?

Answer: The Department fully supports investment in critical freight infrastructure that improves safety and efficiency and contributes to economic growth. The Department’s Office of Multimodal Freight Infrastructure and Policy is leading the effort to achieve the goals of our national freight policy to ensure our multimodal freight network provides a foundation for the United States to compete in the global economy.

Question: On February 6, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) issued a suspension of previously approved State Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Deployment Plans. Prior to that suspension, the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) had awarded its first round of National Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (NEVI) program funding to support 22 projects across the state and was actively soliciting private-sector proposals for its second round of NEVI funding. This sudden policy shift has created unnecessary confusion and uncertainty for both public agencies and private-sector stakeholders working to expand Maryland’s EV charging network. Could you please provide an update on the status and, anticipated timeline, for FHWA to issue revised guidance that would allow states to submit updated deployment plans and restore predictability in the NEVI program?

Answer: FHWA initially stated that it aimed to have updated draft NEVI Formula Guidance published for public comment this spring. FHWA continues to work diligently to release the revised guidance for public comment, and anticipates doing so in the very near future. FHWA plans to subsequently publish final guidance that responds to the comments received.

The Department notes that the Fiscal Year 2026 President’s Budget proposes cancelling \$5.7 billion in Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) funding provided to the Department of Transportation for NEVI and the Charging and Fueling Infrastructure programs.

Question: With nearly 3,200 miles of shoreline, Maryland is highly vulnerable to sea level rise and extreme weather. The PROTECT Program, which Congress established in the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL), provides funding to enhance the resilience of transportation infrastructure to natural disasters, like flooding. This program focuses on funding for planning,

community resilience, and evacuation routes, as well as at-risk coastal infrastructure. Do you support the PROTECT program?

Answer: The PROTECT Program was newly authorized in the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act. (IIJA) which provided the program almost \$9 billion in both formula and competitive grant funding to help make surface transportation more resilient to current and future weather events and natural disasters. The Department has been executing this funding consistent with law and Administration policy.

Question: Do you have other thoughts on how the Department of Transportation could allow flexible use of highway funds for multimodal resiliency projects?

Answer: The PROTECT Program was established by Congress in the IIJA for surface transportation resilience and may be used for multimodal resiliency projects. Further, states may use apportioned formula funds, consistent with applicable Title 23 requirements, to implement project specific environmental hazard mitigation features as they see fit.

Question: The Department of Transportation has stated that they would be reviewing funding for existing grant programs, including those authorized under the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act. Do you commit to honoring funds for grants that have been contracted, including for the Charging and Fueling Infrastructure (CFI) program?

Answer: Reimbursements for allowable costs incurred on projects under existing obligations of funding administered by FHWA, including obligations of CFI program funding, has continued to proceed without interruption. Awarded projects without grant agreements, and therefore no obligations, are under review for consistency with Administration policy, as consistent with law.

Question: As you mentioned, the Department of Transportation is seeing an unprecedented volume of pending grant agreements. I understand and appreciate the administrative burden your team faces in working through a backlog of this scale. Could you please share how the Department is working to address this backlog expeditiously?

Answer: The Department has established a Grants Review Task Force, which is quickly reviewing projects selected through competitive grant programs that do not have a signed grant agreement in place to confirm they comply with current Administration policy consistent with law. Once reviewed, DOT will work with recipients to finalize the terms of their grant agreement and obligate the funding.

As this review continues, the Department will continue to engage recipients to formulate grant agreements and prepare for the obligation of funds once the review of a given project is completed.

Question: What strategies are being implemented to ensure that funds begin flowing to the states in a timely and predictable manner?

Answer: FHWA issued a notice of apportioned Federal-aid highway program formula funding available to the States for obligation for Fiscal Year (FY) 2025 on October 1, 2024, and will issue a notice for FY 2026 formula funding in October 2025 consistent with the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA). New obligations of formula funding have continued to proceed without interruption (except National Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (NEVI) formula funding for which the resumption of obligations is pending updated program guidance and the subsequent approval of revised State NEVI plans).

Non-competitive allocated funding is being provided to recipients consistent with IIJA and enacted appropriations. Obligations for most non-competitive allocated programs are proceeding, including for Congressionally Directed Spending, the Emergency Relief Program, Federal Lands programs, the Puerto Rico Highway Program, and the Construction of Ferry Boats and Ferry Terminal Facilities.

For competitive grant programs, the Department is actively working to review grant agreements for consistency with Administration policy, as consistent with law.

Question: What general timeframe should states expect as you work through the remaining agreements?

Answer: The Department is actively working to review grant agreements for consistency with as Administration policy consistent with law. A timeframe has not been established given the number of agreements and scope of ongoing reviews.

Senator CAPITO. Thank you, Mr. Secretary. I appreciate that.

I do appreciate the beginning statements on the air traffic control system. I know that you guys have diligently been working on that. Safety is safety, whether you are driving or whether you are flying or whether you are on a train, as you made that very, very clear.

I would like to ask you about bridges. Senator Whitehouse mentioned that we still have a ways to go before our bridge infrastructure is where it needs to be for the future. In my State, obviously, we have a lot of rivers and mountains. We have a ton of bridges. We need your partnership to make sure that we are going to have the ability to fix—and we are in the process right now of some major projects, fixing some of our bridges or maintaining them.

What can you say about bridges in terms of what you have seen since you have been there on improving our Nation's bridges, and what more would we need to do to address the issues with bridge safety and bridge maintenance?

Mr. DUFFY. Not far from where I grew up in Wisconsin, the I-35, 35 W I think it was in Minnesota collapsed, a bridge I have gone over many times, the Francis Scott Key Bridge that collapsed. We see that people lose their lives when our bridges are not safe. I know it is a top priority for this committee and for the department as well. We will make sure that the grants that have been awarded are expeditiously moving through those grants, and I am making sure we have funding for that which was awarded.

Beyond that, I think we have to take a look at the list of priorities and the oldest and maybe most dangerous bridges have to be funded first, and those projects have to get underway.

Senator CAPITO. Thank you.

For the past couple of years, I voted for the IIJA, and I am glad that I did. I have raised concerns about the implementation in the IIJA's competitive grant programs and the time it takes, and we have already, we are going to see this as a repeating theme, I think, of the time that it takes to get that funding out the door.

Can you please commit to a timely execution of project grant agreements? We know that there are numerous projects that are still been promised and are not through the pipeline yet, promised by the previous administration, which is fine, but they still did not move them through the pipeline. Can you talk about that, and how you think that you could improve that process in your department?

Mr. DUFFY. Thank you for the question, Senator. A lot of you, many of you have called me and said, where is my project, where is the money, can you speed this up. I will be happy to talk to Senator Whitehouse about questions that are going to come from him on did we slow, did we pause, did we stop.

There are 3,200 announced projects at the department that do not have signed grant agreements, 3,200. We are going to work through those projects. If you say, where is my project? I am not looking at 10 projects for grant agreements, 3,200, some of them date back to 2022.

There is a lot of workload to do to get these projects completed, or get the grant agreements completed and the money out the door to your States. I will just note that Senator, usually, historically, there was 47 to 107 projects announced between election date and

inauguration day. This last administration announced around 950 projects in that timeframe, almost a 1,000 percent increase. Everybody wants their projects, and I am going to do my best to get those projects out the door. It is a historic number that was announced.

It is easy to blow the kazoo and send up the balloons when you announce a project. The hard work is actually doing the grant agreement. I am committed in a bipartisan effort to make sure we get those grant agreements signed and out the door. Especially as we come into the spring building season, that is a top priority for us.

By the way, the first bridge, the first project that we actually got through and done was Senator Whitehouse's. He asked about bipartisanship; I am committed. Infrastructure is non-partisan. We all use roads and bridges in blue and red States, and I am committed to making sure we have a non-partisan view as we move money.

Senator CAPITO. I am interested in the 3,200 projects that basically landed on your desk the day you got sworn in that were not completed. Could you just flesh out a little bit why they might not be? It might be that their environmental review, their financing, can you just kind of line out a little of those?

Mr. DUFFY. That is a good point. Some of them are, the NEPA, National Environmental Policy Act, work had not been done yet. That is true. There are others that would expand capacity. If you are going to expand capacity from two lanes to four lanes, there, it is my understanding there was a set of ideas that we, they did not want to expand the capacity. They would redo current capacity. If it was an expanded capacity, those projects actually sat for a longer period of time.

Senator CAPITO. They sat at the back of the line?

Mr. DUFFY. Yes. Again, when the announcement goes, I am going to work for all of you to get these projects out. If you, I have a lot of complaints, it is a lot of projects that we have to get done to make sure we can meet the commitments that were made in the last administration.

By the way, most of these projects are really good projects. I have not found too many that I disagree with. It is good work for the most part.

Senator CAPITO. All right. Senator Whitehouse?

Senator WHITEHOUSE. Thanks. Again, thank you, Secretary, for being here, and thank you for your assistance with that bit of bridge construction support.

I guess also thank you, there was a misbegotten effort at the Department of Transportation to require your office's approval every time any one of the 50 States wanted to change their State transportation plans. I think probably on a bipartisan basis, State transportation directors said, what? Why do you need to approve our State transportation plans?

You backed that off, and thank you, because that is, that would have been an unnecessary addition to the bureaucracy that bedevils infrastructure projects.

We still have the 3,200 projects. My concern is that while some of them, a lot of what you describe as the problems on the way to

final agreement would actually have been considered and resolved when the grant was awarded. Right? You do not put a grant into a project where you do not know if it is two lanes or four lanes yet. You have to figure that out first.

It strikes me that one of the reasons for the 3,200 case backlog that you have is that you are trying to plow through these executive orders, many of which I believe are both illegal and nonsense, to examine each one of them to see if there are any MAGA hobgoblins and heresies in them like strip out the word climate, or strip out the word equity, that kind of stuff, which when you are fixing a bridge, if the word equity popped up, that is not all that interesting to me. Getting the bridge fixed is what is interesting to me.

If the word climate popped up, that is not all that interesting to me. Getting the bridge fixed is what is interesting to me.

By the way, we just got a significant grant for the Newport Bridge, which is the key artery from the mainland to Aquidneck Island, a lot of traffic over it. The problem was that the cabling was rusting because there is a higher level of humidity. We had to install dehumidification equipment in the cabling between the cladding of the cable and the cable itself inside the cladding to both solve the problem of rust and reduce the rate of rusting.

That grant application would have the word climate in it. The increase in humidity can be tracked to climate change.

If you want to stop a project like that to scrub out the word climate, you are wasting an enormous amount of time. There actually is a climate-related reason for it. If you are dealing with coastal highways, we have roads all around Rhode Island, and I am sure many of my coastal colleagues, and I would not be surprised at West Virginia because of river and rainstorm flooding, you have roads that need repair on a more rapid basis than ordinary.

If the applicant asking for those funds said, oh, yes, and this is going to continue to be a problem because of climate change, to have to go back and undo that seems like massively unnecessary bureaucracy.

Could you give me your, I do not think you have a study on this, but could you give me your take from what you have seen so far as to how many of those 3,200 stuck projects are stuck because of the demand from the White House to have words they do not like, like equity and climate, scrubbed out to meet the, I guess, new anti-heretical requirements of these orders? How much of it is actually like a substantive problem with the infrastructure itself?

Mr. DUFFY. I appreciate the question, Senator. Again, these projects, many of them date back three and, three and a half years. To think that we can move through in 2 months 3,200 announced projects is, it is impossible for us to do that.

Quickly, the problem is not that we are going through these grant NOFOs, Notices of Funding Opportunities, right, looking for the green and the social justice. We are looking for it because it might not be interesting to you, I take your point, but if you are putting on additional requirements with regard to green or social justice, well, that drives up the cost of a project. That takes the project a longer timeframe in which to complete.

I would just note that all of you on this committee and this body, you considered, should we include green, should we include social justice requirements in the IIJA? You debated it, and you did not put it in there. This administration, the last administration, actually put the requirements that you considered but did not include, they put it in the grant agreements. I am actually complying with the will of the Congress by pulling it out. It is going to take longer and cost more.

Senator WHITEHOUSE. Let me just ask you to consider whether the delay of going through that heresy hunt—

Mr. DUFFY. Not a heresy hunt.

Senator WHITEHOUSE [continuing]. is worse than whatever the added cost-up is from having those words included in the grant application.

Mr. DUFFY. I have been there for 2 months, and I do not believe following the will of the Congress is heresy. I think when I do not follow the will of Congress, I am sure I will hear from you. I have due respect for you, Senator, and for this body, and I am following your will by pulling out the green and the social justice, which is not just language. It does not say green, green, green, green, green, social justice, social justice. There are requirements in these proposals that I am pulling out.

Senator WHITEHOUSE. Well, my time is up, so, to be continued. Thank you very much for being here. We will continue this conversation. I am taking my colleague's time right now.

Mr. DUFFY. I appreciate your invitation to come to Rhode Island. I can not wait to go. I was there over the summer and it was beautiful.

Senator WHITEHOUSE. You are going to love it.

Senator CAPITO. Senator Cramer?

Senator CRAMER. Well, first of all, I want to make sure that the minute and a half you went over really is in my time.

[Laughter.]

Senator CRAMER. I think it was a worthwhile minute and a half, Senator.

I was not going to get into any of this, but I can not resist asking, is humidity along the coast new to climate change? Or was there humidity before that had to be considered? I think it is a relevant question in the moment.

Mr. DUFFY. Listen, I am not a climate scientist, but I have to imagine it existed for some time.

Senator CRAMER. I think so. I am, I do marvel, though, at how green this 100-year old steel bridge is. I have seen a lot of rusty ones, and that one is beautiful.

The other thing I have to say, I think all of us on this side of the dais that worked through the current bill and worked closely with your predecessor, Secretary Buttigieg, like him a lot. I mean, I like him a lot. I will tell you, he liked announcements a lot. He was very good at announcements, there were lots and lots of announcements. He showed up at a lot of the announcements and we are grateful for all that.

Your point that the announcement is not the grant I think is an important one to continue to remind us of. Those of us who hate bureaucracy also recognize there is some legitimacy to going

through the grant application and having signatures. I appreciate your raising that point.

Mr. DUFFY. Some of the grant agreement, announcing that you got a project, is fun.

Senator CRAMER. It is.

Mr. DUFFY. It is a great process. You all celebrate, and have cake and ice cream and you cut ribbon. Truly the hard work is getting the grant agreement signed and the money out the door. That is the hard work. Again, so when I say there is 3,200, it is going to take us some time to work through that.

Again, I want to—can I just make one—I know you all want the projects done. I want the projects done. What is great is the President loves infrastructure and wants big, beautiful roads and bridges. It is not just you putting pressure on me. It is the President who is going to say, why are not you getting more money out the door? Get these projects done.

Everyone around agrees on infrastructure.

Senator CRAMER. Since we are on that point, Mr. Secretary, and welcome, and it is great to see you, and I was looking down, the first several of us served with you in the House. Some of them are not even here yet. Welcome, and congratulations.

Along those same lines, one of the things we did put in the current bill is the One Federal Decision, codifying the One Federal Decision rule of the first Trump administration. Yet, I have not seen a great application of that for the last 4 years in the permitting of a lot of these projects, either. I do not know if you have a comment on that.

Mr. DUFFY. That is a good point, and we have to, we do have to streamline the process even further with One Federal Decision, taking the full meaning of the legislation and the language.

Senator CRAMER. In the remaining half of this discussion, at least at this moment, I would point to the emphasis that Chairman Capito put on the formula funding, and the history of formula funding. I often like to refer to the fact that you cannot reserve 300 miles in the middle of the North American continent for gravel along interstate 94, or durum from North Dakota would never become pasta in New York.

I think, while, and by the way, I strongly support the Chairman's emphasis on applying that formula to even more grant programs and discretionary programs, to the degree that we can do that. I mean, I know the political realities of it as well.

I would just be interested, you coming from the middle of America and a pretty rural district, if you could just elaborate maybe a little bit on that commitment to formula funding in the next bill as well. It would help people understand formula funding recognizes that the miles of road are just about as important as how many people are in any particular mile of that road.

Mr. DUFFY. I think it is a good point. Many of us come from North Dakota, West Virginia, Wisconsin. Senator Lummis knows rural as well.

Senator CRAMER. Better than any of us.

Mr. DUFFY. It is a really important point. Again, making sure, again, our urban centers are important, making sure people move there. We can not focus on urban centers and forget rural America

and making sure that, again, a lot of products come from the places where we live. They might move from roads, trains, to ships. Making sure that there is a complete view of infrastructure is incredibly important, and I would share the view of this committee, I think, that we have to have a holistic view of how we have built out infrastructure.

Senator CRAMER. Great point. Some of us have our favorite types of transportation as well. Just so people know, 90 percent of the durum wheat grown in the United States is grown in North Dakota. That is what becomes semolina flour, which becomes pasta. Literally, but it does not all go on the interstate, either. A little bit goes by rail, a little bit gets on a boat now and then.

Anyway, I thank you for understanding. Just know that will be a point of emphasis for a lot of us. Thank you.

Mr. DUFFY. Thank you, Senator.

Senator CAPITO. Thank you.

Senator HUSTED?

Senator HUSTED. Thank you very much.

I wanted to just talk about the concept of time is money, and this process. I come from Ohio, and have only been in the Senate for 10 weeks, and I have viewed Federal Government from afar, and things seem to take so much longer.

I will give you an example. This is not directly related to the Department of Transportation, but broadband. Passed a bill in Congress 2021 about rural broadband, still nothing has been built. We passed a law in the State of Ohio to do rural broadband with State money. We built it in 2 years, all by basically saying, this is what we want, you bid on it, you deliver it, you do it in a timeframe.

In preparation for this conversation this morning, I was looking, you know, how long does it take to get a new exit on a highway? Well, five to 15 years, but if you look at it, it is usually toward 15 years. How long does it take to build a new bridge? Seven to 20 years, typically it is more closer to 20 than it is 7.

What is it that you are doing to institutionalize, to look at how we can deliver this faster? How can we help you?

Mr. DUFFY. First off, Senator, thank you for the question. Welcome to the Senate. Congratulations.

Senator HUSTED. Thank you.

Far, with these delightful colleagues, it has been wonderful.

Mr. DUFFY. You make an incredibly important point. I think Senator Whitehouse made the point that in China, other places in the world, they build their infrastructure so much faster. We have decades of laws and rules and regulations that make it really complicated to build.

What we have done right now at the department is, there are requirements that are put on funding that is in the bill that we have to actually do. I have asked, let us take out all the other requirements that we are putting on from the department so we can build projects faster.

I think we are going to work on NEPA reform in this administration. I know that all of the body bipartisan wants to work on regulation reform as well. Again, we can protect the environment and move projects faster. We are not doing it smartly.

I think it is going to be a whole of government. We all, I think, are recognizing what sounded like a good idea at the beginning is now becoming a weight around our neck as we try to build infrastructure. I would look forward to working with you on what we are going to do at the department, what you all can do in the Senate. If we do that, again, instead of taking 10, 20 years, we could take 3 to 5 years to build out these projects.

Senator HUSTED. I am going to ask you about being intentional about it. Is there anybody's job inside the department to figure out how we are going to go faster?

Mr. DUFFY. What is important for the department is to streamline the process for the States, right? To take off as much of the weight as possible so they can build faster and spend more time turning dirt and less time doing paperwork. We are at the department doing that part.

There are some requirements that the Congress has put on us that we include in these agreements that States have to comply with. Offering more flexibility to States, who have, I think, a more vested interest in moving these projects faster, I think is a key part of this as well. I think Texas has been a great example of delegating authority to Texas and seeing them move more quickly on projects.

Senator HUSTED. Well, we have the rules and regulations in place to protect people, to protect the environment, to make the process more accountable. It actually, the delays end up costing the taxpayers more, not less, because of inflation and other consequences of the delays.

As a competitive item for this Nation, I just take three things that happened in the last 4 years. Rural broadband, charging stations, the CHIPS Act, how long it takes money to get out the door for the construction to go, while China is innovating nuclear power plants. You go through the list of how long it is taking us as a Nation to literally get government money out the door, to build the things we say we need to compete and defend ourselves for economic and national security takes longer and longer.

I would argue that these rules and regulations are at the expense of Americans, that their health, for example, if we know that there is a traffic issue that is a safety issue, and we take years to get it accomplished, people are dying, people's lives, it is not good for the environment if you have to—all these things add up and I just share that and urge you to help us.

Mr. DUFFY. I look forward to working with you. Time is money. We saw with inflation over the last 4 years that these projects have become so much more expensive because they did not move more quickly.

Can I take one moment and just——

Senator CAPITO. Yes, go ahead.

Mr. DUFFY. The cost of a whole project, upwards of 40 percent of the cost is complying with the rules and regulations. We are not turning dirt; we are not building bridges. We are actually giving this to consultants, money to consultants, as we try to go through the regulatory process.

I think if the American people knew that, they would be outraged. They want their bridge. Put the money in—by the way, if

we streamline that process, it is not 40 percent, it is maybe 15 percent. That means we build more bridges, we build more roads, you get more projects and Americans are happier, which is what we want, happy America. Less regulation.

Senator HUSTED. Yes. Every time you have a compliance officer or an attorney, that is one less construction worker or engineer you are employing.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

Senator CAPITO. I am turning slowly to Senator Merkley, because Senator Whitehouse wanted to make a quick comment.

Senator WHITEHOUSE. I just wanted to jump in and remind you that my distaste for interagency process is something that can be remedied purely within the executive branch by adding transparency and accountability so that somebody is in charge when the interagency process fails or derails or delays. Please keep considering that, and both the Chairman and I are eager to give you a thumbs up and a blessing if you can cleanup the swamp of interagency process.

Mr. DUFFY. I will, and you said I might hide behind, I am not going to hide behind that, I will join you in that effort.

Senator CAPITO. Senator Merkley?

Senator MERKLEY. Thank you very much, Madam Chairman. I really appreciate the point you are making about time is money. Really, the concerns that folks have back home in Oregon is that projects, instead of being expeditiously going forward that they are being delayed.

Everything you are saying, as I walked into the hearing room, I am like, yes, yes, yes, and I am just basically asking, put that philosophy to work. I will just take an example with one of the bridges over the Columbia River, the Hood River Bridge. It is absolutely sitting on the desk waiting for approval for the contract. Meanwhile, you have the design team waiting, you have, trying to line up the construction side, trying to get it all lined up. You can not line those things up until the signature gets onto the page.

In this case, it is a signature on the INFRA grant. Can you take a look at that project and say, is there any reason to hold this up? Everything you just expressed, that is exactly how people feel. Like, this project will be so much more expensive month by month if it can not go expeditiously forward.

Mr. DUFFY. Is this the one between Oregon and Washington?

Senator MERKLEY. Well, it is one of two, actually. The Hood River is in the middle of the Columbia Gorge, so it is the smaller project. It has a \$200 million INFRA. It is not the interstate crossing, which is another really important project.

Mr. DUFFY. I will take a look at the smaller project. I would love to talk to you about the I-5, because I think there is, the bridge needs to be redone. There are some simple things we could do to move that thing more quickly and get through the regulatory hurdles with the Coast Guard and others. I would love to have a conversation about that. Again, I think that would be a top priority for us to move that project.

Senator MERKLEY. As you travel the Country, you can remind people that the only drawbridge left in the interstate system across the Country is over the Columbia River. If America can not figure

out to put a bridge that lets the ship traffic go under it across the Columbia, then who are we really?

Mr. DUFFY. Music to my ears.

Senator MERKLEY. Thank you. Well, so that Hood River project is one. A second project is the Pacific Coast Intermodal Port Project. This is where there is a deepwater port on the Oregon coast that is perfect to establish more ability to move freight. We have many things going on in the freight world, but we really saw before how overloaded the Tacoma and the ports in California, southern, but this is right in the middle of all that. It has a railroad line that serves it, connects into the railroads going all across the Country and the railroads going up the Columbia Gorge. It is a perfect place to add port capacity.

They too are hoping to see the philosophy you have been expressing applied, so they can go forward with the design work for that port.

Mr. DUFFY. Is this Coos Bay?

Senator MERKLEY. Yes, this is Coos Bay.

Mr. DUFFY. I have had internal conversations with the administration. It is on my radar, and I will continue to look at it and work with others in the administration about this project and how it could move forward every productive way. I think it is an important area, and an important project.

Senator MERKLEY. I have often heard folks talking about how when there is a project with national significance, it really needs to go to the top of the pile. This is one with not just regional but national significance, to be able to get our products out, fast and cheaply out of the U.S., to be able to get products in fast and cheaply. We do not want them going through, you know, Canada is adding port capacity. We do not want to have to have stuff imported to Canada and then ship it down into the United States. This is a huge opportunity for us to do something of national significance.

Mr. DUFFY. I hear you, and I have heard others talk about this same topic, Senator. I would be happy to partner on it.

Senator MERKLEY. Thank you.

Mr. DUFFY. To think through how it would look and how we could do it.

Senator MERKLEY. We have a lot of projects, obviously, lined up, as every State does. Another one is the Safe Streets and Roads for All Program. There is a whole series of grants. These are largely related to bicycle, pedestrian infrastructure, and helping students get to school safely. I did notice a whole bunch of orange shirts with the word "bike" on it.

The thing that we appreciate about expanding our bike capacity in Oregon is it reduces the congestion on our roads. Not only is it folks who are choosing a cheaper way and a healthier way to get to work but it is a way for everyone else in their car to get to work faster. Everyone appreciates it.

I wanted to encourage that set of Safe Streets and Roads grants. They are minor grants; they just need your autopen to go to work.

Mr. DUFFY. The Congress was clear, and I am going to abide by the will of the Congress. I am not going to hold up any projects.

Again, bikes are healthy, bikes oftentimes in many places move people faster.

Senator MERKLEY. In the years I was working here in D.C., in the 1980's, I biked everywhere. I always beat my friends in cars. By the time they could figure out a parking space, I had already been on location 15 minutes. Anyway, thank you so much.

Mr. DUFFY. Now people are riding scooters.

Senator CAPITO. Senator Lummis?

Senator LUMMIS. Thanks, Madam Chairman, for beginning the dialog between the Department of Transportation and this committee on surface transportation now. We have a lot of big challenges.

Mr. Secretary, honestly, I have to say, since hours after you were sworn in, you have been drinking out of a fire hose. You have had crisis after crisis, challenge after challenge. You have handled it magnificently, and I want to thank you for the way that you are continuing to work through these projects while you continue to communicate with the American people.

I want to thank you specifically for looking at the Rock Springs, Wyoming airport grants. Like everyone else, we are all hopeful that some of these grants that were signed, sealed and not quite delivered are moving forward. Bless you for that.

A couple subjects with regard to surface transportation. Electronic Vehicle (EV) mandates just really do not work for Wyoming because of our climate, because of our cold weather. Electric vehicles just do not go as far as they can elsewhere, because of that there are not very many.

When there are electric vehicles, they are just not contributing to maintaining our roads and bridges, because you have to be using a liquid fuel that pays a gas or diesel tax in order to maintain our roads. We are all going to have to work together to find out a way that electric vehicles can help contribute to the maintenance of our Nation's roads and bridges.

I have one little sliver of it that I want to talk to you about. The EV mandates and the National Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Program (NEVI) charger program, and its related discretionary program, budgeted \$7.5 billion with really disappointing results. It is leading to the suspension in February that occurred so it could be evaluated.

I want to look at that program and ask you to look at it with me. The NEVI program just buckled under piles of regulation and rigid technical requirements, private capital was left on the sidelines to address the EV charging issue. Wyoming and other States have millions of dollars sitting idle in accounts for chargers that they just can not build. That is money that is not creating this joyful, happy America where we have great highways and great bridges.

I introduced this bill called the Highway Funding Flexibility Act that would authorize States to redirect unused EV charger funds to roads and bridges, and then highway safety priorities like truck parking and wildlife crossings could also be eligible. It would empower States like Wyoming to devote money to real highway needs with potentially billions nationwide for addressing infrastructure priorities.

I would like your help exploring this and maybe other ways to make sure that money that has been appropriated could be put to use on big, durable projects that connect our Country, some of the projects that my colleagues have raised.

How do you recommend we go about having a dialog about things like that?

Mr. DUFFY. First, Senator, I live in a place in Wisconsin that is cold and rural as well, and EVs do not work that well in my part of the Country also. Just in regard to the NEVI program, just to be clear, the guidance, I think, from the last administration was not working. I believe there has been over 3 years, 66 chargers built with the \$5 billion out of the \$7.5 billion that was directed toward the EV chargers, and again, very burdensome regulation.

We are redoing the guidance. We can have a debate about whether we should have charging stations or not. You guys all passed a bill with charging stations. I think if you pass a bill saying, we should build out American infrastructure with charging stations, we should build charging stations. We should not pay people to not have charging stations, we have 66 of them.

I look at the guidance, I am going to make the guidance work. Whether I agree with it or not, you told me to do it, and so let us do it well. There is still money there, and that is a role for the Congress to say, hey, do we want to take this money and use it for something else? That will be your all's decision as you go forward this next year.

I am going to do what you directed and 66 is a shameful number. Again, it goes back to the Senator from Ohio's point, there are way too many rules and regulations. People can not comply, and then you do not get the build. I would be happy to work with you, though, on kind of what we are thinking, and happy to work with you on what you are thinking.

I do also believe that EVs should pay part of the cost of roads and bridges that they use. How you do that is a question that we will have to grapple with.

Senator LUMMIS. Thanks, Madam Chairman. If we get a second round, I will ask you about truck parking. There again, there is a Department of Labor rule that says you can only drive a certain number of hours and then you absolutely have to stop. There is no place for them to park. That is an issue for another round.

Thank you so much, Mr. Secretary.

Mr. DUFFY. That is a safety issue. We have to address it.

Senator CAPITO. Thank you. Senator Padilla?

Senator PADILLA. Thank you, Madam Chair. Secretary Duffy, thank you for being here. I appreciated our productive and constructive dialog by phone yesterday on some of the California transportation priorities that we have been discussing for a while.

I appreciate, Madam Chair, the opportunity to shed light on the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. It has meant more than \$54 billion of investment in a number of projects throughout the State of California that not only help keep up with our transit needs, help keep modern and efficient some of the Nation's busiest ports, and of course, our extensive highway system. We are doing so to meet some deferred maintenance needs in some respects, but also make

necessary improvements to accommodate both a growing population and a growing economy.

A lot of these projects have been a long time in coming. We are finally glad to see the activity happening.

As we talked about yesterday, it is also critical that the administration supports some key events that are drivers of goods movement, people movement, and are a catalyst for modernization. I am specifically referring to the L.A. 2028 Olympics to be hosted in Los Angeles, the most populous region in the Country already. Add to that the anticipated 50 million ticket holders coming to events in 2028 to make it successful and to lay the foundation for economic growth well beyond the Olympics.

We are looking to partner with the Department of Transportation in a big, big way and 2028 seems like a long ways away, but it is actually just around the corner from a planning and preparation standpoint. We need funding for those preparations now.

I think it would be helpful to have a designated line item in the President's budget to help us prepare not only for L.A. 2028, by the way, but also to lay the foundation for the 2034 Winter Olympics in Salt Lake City.

Long intro to ask you what you might be able to provide in terms of an update on your work to support the Olympics in 2028, including any work with the OMB to develop funding proposals for the Olympics.

Mr. DUFFY. I appreciate the question, Senator. Again, it is the Olympics that are going to be hosted in L.A., but in America.

There is a task force in this administration that we are part of, that I have designated someone to as we think through what should the administration be looking at, what are the needs of the greater L.A. area as we, to your point, we are going to see a lot of people coming to our Country. We are going to move them, house them, and again, that is a thoughtful process that we are engaging in right now. I would agree with you; 3 years is right around the corner. Not a lot of time; we have to move quickly.

Senator PADILLA. Move them, house them, and help maintain safe and secure events around the Olympics.

Question on a different topic. The Infrastructure and Jobs Act provided \$8 billion in advance appropriations for the FTA's, Federal Transit Administration, capital investment grants program, one of the items we talked about yesterday, which helps fund large transit capital projects. Projects make their way through the pipeline after already rigorous review on their merit and their feasibility. There is a number of critical projects in California making their way through the pipeline as we speak.

As you can imagine, there are some constituents, there are some transit agencies back home, some municipalities that are a little nervous about the reliability of that funding, given some of the changes and whiplash that we are experiencing here in Washington.

As your team executes the program, can you assure us that the review process and just the awarding of funds going forward will continue to simply be based on merit?

Mr. DUFFY. Yes, Senator, and I think you might also be referring to the California High Speed Rail project, which we are going—

Senator PADILLA. One of a number, yes.

Mr. DUFFY. Per our conversation yesterday, our people have been in touch with the California Rail Authority, I believe is who that is.

I do believe as a philosophy if we commit to rail, if we commit to infrastructure, we should actually build the infrastructure we commit to. I know that this project you have laid out, those distinct differences for the L.A. to San Francisco portion of this high speed rail. When we skip timelines and projections of cost that we can not meet, and it is \$33 billion, it can be like \$133 billion. There are timeframes that were set, it should be done by 2020, now there is no timeframe in which it is going to be completed.

That is not your fault, Senator, but we have to actually deliver on projects for the people. We do not have high speed rail in America. If we want to have high speed rail and we want to dedicate money to it, let us actually show America what high speed rail looks like because we built it. We did not just spend the money on a project, we built a project.

Senator PADILLA. I respect that, Mr. Secretary, but to be clear, that is one of a number of projects I was making reference to. There are transit projects, including rail lines, in and around San Diego. Second, part of the city in California, another one of the largest cities in America, in and around Los Angeles, second largest city in America, but the anchor for the most populous county in America. Around the San Francisco Bay area.

There is a significant economic contribution to the Nation and our Federal coffers that can continue to grow with the proper infrastructure investment. I want to keep those moving along.

My time is up. I will submit some questions for the record. I appreciate your attention and partnership.

Senator CAPITO. Senator Sullivan?

Mr. DUFFY. I want to keep them safe, too, Senator. I want, when people ride the rail, I want them to be safe when they move.

Senator PADILLA. Absolutely.

Senator SULLIVAN. Thank you, Madam Chair.

Mr. Secretary, great to see you. I just want to really thank you. I think you are doing a great job. You have been very responsive. That press conference we had with our congressional delegation over at the Department of Transportation after the plane crash in Alaska was really meaningful to my constituents. Thank you. Keep up the fantastic work.

I want to build on what we call the FASI initiative, the Federal Aviation Safety Initiative in Alaska. I know you are committed to that. I gave a big shout-out to you in my annual speech to our Alaska legislature last week.

One thing to followup on, when you are talking about ATC, the Anchorage Center for the FAA on the air traffic controllers, these men and women do a great job. I would love for you, when you come to Alaska, to see them. I agree, it is like post-it notes, floppy disks, it is so antiquated. They do not just do aviation control for Alaska. Anyone who is flying from the lower 48 to Asia, Japan, Korea, they fly over Alaska. The ATC in Alaska essentially takes them, controls them, hands them off all the way in Tokyo. They are protecting the whole Country.

Can you commit to me to help with technical upgrades? I just met with a bunch of our ATC leadership and boy, oh, boy, they are great, but they really, really, they are World War II era technology.

Mr. DUFFY. I would look forward to, I worked out what will be a proposal for the Senate and the House. I have shared it with the President. We are trying to pressure test the cost on this before I send it to all of you.

We need to, this is an American effort. Time has killed, because we have spent a lot of money on trying to upgrade air traffic control, and there are a lot of high-faluting ideas out there. We are at the basics. Let us build the basics of this system that gets rid of World War II and brings us into the 21st century. Alaska is a key part of it.

We talked about hot spots around the Country. You mentioned the Anchorage area. That has been a focus of the FAA and using AI technology to see if we are missing something that is not visible to the human eye with regard to issues in your airspace.

Senator SULLIVAN. Right, and thank you. Again, when you are looking at ATC tech, software upgrade, boy, oh, boy, Anchorage Center needs it. It is not just for Anchorage, like I said. They take care of everybody flying to Asia.

Mr. DUFFY. I want to do the whole Country, everybody needs it. We need a whole American buildout. Good American jobs, tens of thousands of jobs. It would be great.

Senator SULLIVAN. Could not agree more.

Bridges, I am so glad to see the Chairman and my good friend, the Ranking Member, talking about big, beautiful bridges. That is a beautiful bridge, Senator Whitehouse.

By the way, the one thing, though, that my good friend from Rhode Island did not mention on permitting delays, he mentioned reforms, bureaucracy, the freezes. Far left radical environmentally frivolous lawsuits, my State lives with that. That is what we deal with every darned day. If there is not litigation reform, these groups want to kill roads, bridges, ports in Alaska, they get a free hand.

These groups are allowed to sue like six, 7 years after records of decision. It is ridiculous. We need permitting reform that limits the radical far left environmental groups from crushing every project, particularly in my State. I can not wait to work with Senator Whitehouse on those ideas, too.

Senator WHITEHOUSE. Representing the radical far left.

[Laughter.]

Senator SULLIVAN. Well, you kind of do. We are still good friends.

Anyway, I did have an amendment a couple of years ago that I would love for you to take a look at on bridges that said, if it is an existing bridge and you are going to rebuild it in the same space or do maintenance on it, why in the heck do you need to do a NEPA?

My bill, which every Republican supported, I can not remember her name, a California Senator, she went on the floor screaming, "The Sullivan amendment will kill children." I am like, what? I mean, so we want an exclusion from NEPA if all you are doing is building in the same footprint for a bridge. It is common sense.

Would not you agree with something like that, Mr. Secretary?

Mr. DUFFY. A hundred percent.

Senator SULLIVAN. Okay, I am going to re-attack that, and Sheldon Whitehouse is going to be my cosponsor.

[Laughter.]

Senator WHITEHOUSE. I do like working with Senator Sullivan.

Senator SULLIVAN. Okay, that is what I need.

Mr. Secretary, I have a list of frozen build grants that I am going to just have you for the record, not many. You guys have done a good, you just unfroze the FHWA, Federal Highway Administration, one in Whittier, Alaska. If you and I can work on that.

Then finally, we will submit that for the record. Two final quick questions. We are trying to do a lot, you just sent me a letter, I really appreciate that, yesterday, on the building out of the Port of Alaska, Port of Anchorage, we call it. We are getting Federal dollars, MARAD, Maritime Administration, and others. Thank you.

Once again, the permitting is, I wrote you about NEPA, but there is a NOAA, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association, beluga whale thing. We need to get everybody together on the permitting side for the Port of Anchorage and follow through on the President's day one Executive Order on unleashing Alaska's economy and resources, which we are very happy President Trump did that.

Can I get your commitment to work with us on that kind of, because it is not just you guys, and your letter was much appreciated, but it is other agencies and I think we just all need to get together and say, hey, this is a really needed port, we are finally getting Federal dollars to it. We have to get the permitting right. If it is six, 7 years on permits, that is just wasted money, wasted time.

Mr. DUFFY. I would welcome the opportunity to work with you, Senator, and I look forward to seeing you in August.

Senator SULLIVAN. Great. Then finally, I will submit it for the record, we have an idea on the Tribal Transportation Program that can help our tribes get more infrastructure dollars. As you know a lot of our tribes, not just in Alaska, but in the lower 48, they really suffer from lack of infrastructure. There are some ideas to help that program be more efficient, get some more funding to our tribes throughout America. I would welcome to work with you on that.

Mr. DUFFY. Yes, Senator.

Senator SULLIVAN. Thank you, Mr. Secretary. You are doing a great job.

Senator WHITEHOUSE. [Presiding.] That takes us to Senator Schiff.

Senator SCHIFF. Thank you. Mr. Secretary, thank you for being here.

I wanted to raise concern about a number of projects in California that are still waiting for an answer. In the MEGA program, \$283 million for the Port of Long Beach Rail Construction project; \$166 million for Contra Costa's Innovate 680 program; \$53 million for a multi-modal facility in Madera. In the INFRA bill, \$105 million for Redwood City, S.R. 84 and U.S. 101, \$98 million for CalTrans S.R. 99 Tulare improvements.

In the Rural Surface Transportation Program, \$41 million for the city of Tracy, Corral Hollow Road project, \$35 million for Yuba County, Plumas Lake Boulevard and FHWA, \$102 million for

CalTrans I-5, \$56 million for SJV, San Joaquin Valley, air pollution control district, \$55 million for California Energy Commission.

Reconnecting Communities, \$26 million for the housing authority in L.A., \$11 million for the city of Goleta multipurpose path. In the RAISE program, \$25 million for BART, \$23 million for the Palmdale grade separation project.

This is a partial list. These projects really have not received word, so they are unclear of the status of the projects. The delays might end up killing the projects. The delays will certainly end up costing more to do these projects, as material costs go up and other costs increase.

I am raising the concern because we do not know whether these are changes in policy that are affecting grants that have already been approved, or whether this is a lack of personnel to administer the grants. I am further concerned with layoffs that might further delay getting this money out the door to do these vital infrastructure projects.

I would ask for your comments generally on when you think these cities and counties will hear from you and your department. Also whether you are mindful of the fact that delay has a cost, a real dollars and cents cost.

Mr. DUFFY. I appreciate the question, Senator. I would maybe give the whole number, there have been 200 awards announced for California to the tune of \$1.74 billion. There is a lot of money that announcements have been made over the course of the last 3 years. We do not have grant agreements on those announcements.

I do not know that you were here for this, but there are 3,200 announcements that were made by the last administration where there were no grant agreements. That is unheard of. I am going to work through those announcements and get grant agreements so we can build those projects that you are talking about.

Just quickly, I do not want the Republicans to get annoyed at me, but Senator Whitehouse got a bridge, and in California we are going to announce the Madera 410 Expressway, that one has been completed, we are almost ready to sign that, as well as the Otay Mesa \$150 million, that is a border crossing. I believe that one is ready to go as well.

We have three Democrat announcements. I do not have any for you Republicans yet, but we are going through the projects.

Senator SCHIFF. We are a very bipartisan committee.

Mr. DUFFY. You are.

Senator SCHIFF. I know I speak for my Republican colleagues when I say they are delighted with money coming to my State.

[Laughter.]

Mr. DUFFY. We will see how that goes.

Senator SCHIFF. Not quite as delighted as if it were going to their State.

Mr. Secretary, I appreciate anything you can do to accelerate the approval process. Can you speak to how the cuts in personnel may be impacting the timeliness of approvals in this area?

Mr. DUFFY. Yes, I appreciate the question. That has not impacted how we are able to move through the grant agreement process. We still have more employees in the department than we did when Joe Biden took office.

It is the sheer volume that I was left with. Just to maybe remake this point, in between Obama and Donald Trump, there was 47 projects announced between election day and inauguration. Between Trump and Biden, there was 107 projects announced between election day and inauguration day. In this last term, there was about 950 projects announced.

There has been a massive number of announcements, historic. Then that means our department has to do the work of, truly the work is doing the grant agreements. The announcements are fun, but grant agreements are the work. I am going to get through that, but it is going to take me some time. I would ask for some patience from the committee just because the workload is so significant.

Senator SCHIFF. Mr. Secretary, if there is any further information you need and you are having any delay on our end, please have your staff reach out to mine. We want to make sure that we get you all the information necessary to move these projects forward.

Mr. DUFFY. I appreciate that, Senator.

Senator SCHIFF. Thank you. I yield back.

Senator WHITEHOUSE. Particularly if the delay is substantively based and not a heresy hunt.

Senator CURTIS. Thank you.

As we were talking about bridges, I saw one big beautiful bridge from the Senator from California's State over to my State, skipping the State in between.

Senator WHITEHOUSE. Quite a bridge.

[Laughter.]

Senator CURTIS. Secretary Duffy, so delighted to have you here in this capacity. I will associate myself with my colleagues who have complimented your fast and early start. Thank you for jumping right in and the work you do.

I will be careful, because I do not know your travel schedule, but hypothetically if you found yourself in Utah in the next short time, we would be very excited. We have a project we would love to show you, our FrontRunner. I think you are familiar with that. We have the Olympics coming also, a few years later than California.

Eighty percent of our population is serviced by this one rail because of the geography of our State. That 80 percent is expected to double in no short time. We would love to have your support on that project. I would love to personally show you that as well, given the opportunity.

Mr. DUFFY. Yes, Senator, I would love to work with you. If I could just take a moment, I want to extend my condolences to the State of Utah. You lost a lioness of a legislator and a friend of mine, and I know a friend to the great State of Utah, Mia Love, who served in our body in the House. She lost her battle with cancer. She has a wonderful family, and I know she loved Utah. She served your State well. Our hearts are broken.

Senator CURTIS. Thank you. From the State, thank you for your friendship with her, too. I know she thought very highly of you.

I also want to bring up, Utah is unique in the sense of our regional planning, MPOs, Metropolitan Planning Organizations, they actually like each other and get along. At the time I was serving as mayor, I was told that we had the only statewide MPO project

in the Country where all the MPOs agreed across the entire State. The synergy is just really important.

I just wanted to get your thoughts on MPOs, particularly in the reauthorization bill, how you see the role of MPOs.

Mr. DUFFY. Senator, if it is working well in Utah, and as we go through the reauthorization, I am sure you will be a champion, and I will take your lead on what we learn from the success, and how do we improve on the successes in this new bill.

Senator CURTIS. Excellent. Good.

We have had a lot of conversation today about bureaucracy and regulations. Going back to my mayor days, whenever we built a project, we knew the rule of thumb was if we took one dollar of Federal money it increased the cost of our project by 30 percent. Keeping the same standards, right, all the same NEPA requirements and yet, it was led by the State, and not the Federal Government.

One of my questions for you is what role can we transition traditionally done by the Federal Government to the States? Utah loves to be the lead on these projects. We would love to get your thoughts on that and how we can deal with that.

Mr. DUFFY. I think it is a great point. We have been trying to designate more authority to States, because they move projects faster than have happened when going through the Federal Government.

To the larger point, I think there is a philosophy about what we have to do with these permits and the environmental reviews. I do believe there is an understanding, Democrat and Republican, that has been created today is not what was anticipated when bills were passed. That is why I think there is bipartisan support to do reform in this space, so we can move projects faster and more cheaply. Again, we do not have to sacrifice an environmental review, but I think it was Senator Sullivan who mentioned the litigation and the complication and the cost is real.

I will do my part; I know the administration wants to do their part. The Congress has to do their part as well to streamline this process.

Senator CURTIS. Given any opportunity, Utah would love to serve as the lead agency in environmental projects. We would love to talk to you about that, and how that might help us streamline.

Mr. DUFFY. I would love that.

Senator CURTIS. Good. Our recreational trails program, I am just going to read a stat here, off-highway vehicle users like four-wheelers, ATVs and off-road motorcycles contribute \$281 million annually to the Highway Trust Fund and only receive \$84 million back out of it. We would love to have that discussion with you, too. That is a big deal in Utah, returning some of those back to the trails programs.

Mr. DUFFY. I would welcome that discussion. Again, I know it is big in Utah, but northern Wisconsin also, big deal, a lot of people come to ride through our beautiful forests.

Senator CURTIS. Sounds like something I need to do. I will get out to Wisconsin. Thank you.

Mr. DUFFY. I recommend July or August.

Senator CURTIS. Okay, thanks, Mr. Secretary. I yield my time.

Senator CAPITO. [Presiding.] Senator Kelly?

Senator KELLY. Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you to Secretary Duffy for being here today. It was great to have the opportunity to speak to you on the phone yesterday.

I want to start by discussing the review of the competitive grant awards, as we discussed on the phone, and the guidance issued by the Department of Transportation on March 11th outlining the process of reviewing projects for grant awards that are not yet finalized.

This has caused significant disruption for a number of our projects in Arizona, including the replacement of the 22d Street Bridge in Tucson. I was on the phone with the mayor of Tucson yesterday about this, Regina Romero. This 22d Street Bridge project replaces an outdated bridge for cars that are going over Union Pacific's main Southern Transcon rail line in Tucson. It needs to be replaced. There are cars, or there are certain sized trucks and emergency vehicles that can not go over this bridge, not allowed.

There is also a project in Arizona, it is the widening of U.S. Highway 93, which is one of the deadliest roadways in Arizona, and part of what we call the future interstate 11 between Phoenix and Las Vegas. Phoenix and Las Vegas are perhaps the two closest cities in the Country, major cities, that are not connected by an interstate highway.

There is also the replacement of four bridges on interstate 40 in northern Arizona that were not built to current standards. Then a reconfiguration of a three-way interchange in the west valley, that is outside Phoenix, that also has an at-grade railway crossing and is one of the most congested intersections in the State.

There is also a project that widens U.S. Highway 95 to address a decades-long problem of traffic and unsafe roadway conditions between the city of Yuma and the Army's Yuma Proving Grounds in southern Arizona. Then there is more than a dozen more. I could go on; I am not going to do that.

I have sent you and your staff a full list of these priority projects. I will note, all of these projects were announced before election day, not after. None of them were selected for political reasons. They were selected because they are important to my State and they meet the purposes of these congressionally authorized grant programs. They repair bridges, they reduce congestion, they improve safety. Based on your testimony and our prior conversations, I am pretty sure we agree those are the exact types of projects that should receive funding.

Yet, for no fault of their own, these grant recipients in Arizona have had to wait several months now, not able to move forward on reviews or grant agreements, and forced to delay their construction schedules. I just had a bunch of my constituents in the office today talking about and asking, why are these things stopped?

Secretary Duffy, what updates can you give about when the internal review of grants that was laid out on March 11th will be completed?

Mr. DUFFY. Senator, again I agree, many of the projects, good projects. I am told there are 44 awards that you received for \$561 million in the State of Arizona. They were awarded before election

day. I would note many of these go back two and 3 years, these projects.

Senator KELLY. Yes.

Mr. DUFFY. I love that you are saying that I can cleanup two or 3 years of announcements in 2 months, that is a little bit challenging. I am committing to you, like I did on the phone, I am going to work through these projects.

Senator KELLY. Explain to me what do you mean by cleanup? What is required to clean them up? This is money appropriated by Congress, by Democrats and Republicans, grants that were awarded and now things seem to have come to a halt on many of these projects.

Mr. DUFFY. For obligated money, when there is an obligation, a grant agreement is signed where there was an earmark for Congress, all that money is still going out. There has been no pause, there has been no hold, there has been no—money is going per the law on those grant agreements.

The unobligated money is the money where there has been an award, someone did a big announcement, hey, you get your project for the 22d Street Tucson bridge or road, and then it takes time to do the grant agreement. That is the actual work part of the process.

The announcement is easy. The grant agreement is the work. There are 3,200 of those projects that we have sitting at the department where the fun part was done with the announcement. We have to do the work of doing the grant agreement with the States. We are going to work through that quickly, as quickly as possible.

It is a historically large number. I take your point. You alone have 44 projects that were announced that do not have grant agreements on them. A lot of you all have these projects and you are all, I think rightfully annoyed that the money is not coming.

Many of them are years old. Again, if you are annoyed or concerned, I think the focus should not be on me, it should be elsewhere. We have been there 2 months; someone else was there for 4 years. I will work on those with you.

Senator KELLY. All right. Thank you. I appreciate it.

Senator CAPITO. Senator Alsobrooks?

Senator ALSOBROOKS. Thank you so much, Madam Chair.

Secretary Duffy, good to see you again.

Mr. DUFFY. You as well, Senator.

Senator ALSOBROOKS. I enjoyed the conversation yesterday.

During our discussion, we talked about our time as county executives. You know the Federal transportation programs really are so integral to the success of our States, projects like road maintenance, bridge repairs, safety projects. I am looking forward to working with you and working with this committee to craft a bipartisan surface transportation reauthorization bill.

I am also wanting to ask you about three questions. One is regarding construction costs for infrastructure that we know, particularly highway construction, have increased significantly. The Federal Highway Administration's National Highway Construction cost index, which measures the rate of inflation and labor and material costs, increased, we know, 59 percent since 2021, 36 percent between 2022 and the first half of 2023.

These costs continue to rise. We know that they really, this will impact how much infrastructure we can build with allocated funds.

The question is, how will the administration plan to ensure that transportation funding keeps pace with inflation, so that projects in States like Maryland are not delayed and are not downsized?

Mr. DUFFY. Senator, I think that is a great question and I appreciated our conversation yesterday, two former prosecutors. I appreciate the good work you have done in all the roles you have had in your public service.

You are right, we have to do our work in the department to get these projects out the door, get grant agreements signed and get new notices of funding opportunity done as well. Again, we can have a massive infrastructure build in this Country. The sooner we do it, I think to your point, the more cost effective it will be. We get today's cost when we do projects, not tomorrow's cost if they are delayed.

I think also an important part of it is not just the work that we have to do. I do believe that the Congress has to do its work on permitting reform. That is taking a very long time, too. It is not the work that you have done or the department has done, it is that the process to go through to begin these projects takes so long. If they are delayed, five, six, 10 years, the cost of completion is significant.

Also, part of that, we can reduce the cost of the consultants and the permitting, which means more money will be there for the road or the bridge or whatever, the rail that we are working on.

Senator ALSOBROOKS. Okay. Also, I know there has been a lot of conversation today about bridges. Maryland happens to also be very concerned about a bridge, in particular the Francis Scott Key Bridge that collapsed after being hit by a vessel in 2024. The collapse highlighted some vulnerabilities that we have in our Nation's bridge infrastructure, and particularly around bridges that were not designed to withstand these modern vessel strikes.

In response to the tragedy in Maryland, the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) conducted an investigation and issued a preliminary report which highlighted other high risk bridges that are across the Country.

The question is whether you will commit to expeditiously adopting the recommendations that the NTSB outlined in that preliminary report?

Mr. DUFFY. I would note I have worked very closely with the NTSB and their Chair, Jennifer Homendy, has done an excellent job and has partnered with us very well. I want to take a look at the recommendations, and again, to implement recommendations on the number of bridges that she highlighted would indicate a significant amount of money that comes in this upcoming bill.

Again, the resources have to be provided and you all have to have the discussion if that is a priority for the Congress. I am happy to engage. We should have a broader conversation together about what that priority list looks like.

Again, the Francis Scott Key Bridge, lives were lost there, tragic. We want to make sure that does not happen again.

Senator ALSOBROOKS. Okay. Just a final question, I know we talked also about transit. On average, the Washington Metropoli-

tan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) carries over 800,000 passengers daily across rail and bus systems. Very important to the D.C. area and the metropolitan area, including Maryland.

I want to ask you whether you will, the funding stream has been so important to us. I know that the lack of predictable funding really does harm the safety of passengers. I know we talked a lot about safety on those trains.

As Secretary, will you work with Congress in supporting long-term predictable funding streams for transit systems like WMATA and MTA, Maryland Transit Administration?

Mr. DUFFY. I am happy to have that conversation. I do think that, again, everyone driving in a car may be challenging if you are coming into Washington, DC or to New York City. Transit is an important part of it.

We should expect that if we want people to ride our trains, our trains should be safe. They should not be subject to violence on our subways or our trains. I think that is local communities, and I think the mayor has been making good efforts in D.C. here. We have to take steps to make sure people are safe.

Also, I think we have to look at the cost. In New York, I believe it is, the next most expensive place to build subways is London. New York is five times more expensive than London. We have to get our costs under control as well. We do not have an unlimited amount of money, we do not have a money printing machine, though some people might think the Congress is a money machine. It is not.

Let us use the money well and make investments that go further for the taxpayer and the American people and make sure that they are safe. I would work with you on that and figure out how we make those goals a reality.

Senator ALSOBROOKS. Thank you. I yield. Thank you.

Senator CAPITO. Thank you. Senator Blunt Rochester?

Senator BLUNT ROCHESTER. Thank you, Chairwoman Capito and Ranking Member Whitehouse.

It is good to see you, Secretary Duffy. I want to first of all thank you for your responsiveness when I called or texted. You have been very responsive and I appreciated our conversation as well in preparation for today's hearing.

I am running back and forth between two committees, so I apologize. The other committee was also focused on safety, the Commerce Committee. We were talking about aviation safety.

Today we all know how important safety is, and I just want to thank you for taking the time.

I want to focus, for me, on a couple of projects, you have probably heard a theme here from many of us, that are important to Delaware. I know when we talked, one of our conversations a few months ago was about the announcement of funding freezes. You were very responsive at that time.

I shared with you recently that in Delaware, we have the Cape May-Lewes Ferry system, which received a \$20 million grant to replace an aging vessel with a hybrid ferry that is now on hold. This new hybrid ferry's engine would reduce fuel consumption by 35 percent. That is transformational.

Over the past 60 years, the Cape May-Lewes Ferry has been a stable provider for travel and tourism. The service transports approximately 775,000 passengers and 275,000 vehicles a year. Without this funding for the modernization, this vessel, we would just be at risk.

Secretary Duffy, I wanted to talk to you about the certainty of these funds. Can I tell my constituents that this funding for the project is still confirmed?

Mr. DUFFY. Yes, so Senator, just—yes. When you say the money was, we froze money, we did not freeze any money at the department. There are obligated projects that money continued to go out on. These are, I appreciate, you have been very kind—

Senator BLUNT ROCHESTER. No, that is what I mean you were responsive to call me back and tell me the money is not—

Mr. DUFFY. These are announced projects that we needed grant agreements on. That is going to take some work. I do not see any issue with the announcements, and that we should be able to do grant agreements. I have to again prioritize, for everybody has projects to the tune of 3,200 of them.

I am trying to get through them as quickly as possible. You can tell your constituents, the Secretary does not see any issue with these grant agreements that were announced and he is going to try to work through them as quickly as possible.

Senator BLUNT ROCHESTER. Thank you. I just request that our team continue to followup with each other after the hearing.

Mr. DUFFY. Absolutely.

Senator BLUNT ROCHESTER. I would like to bring another project to your attention and that is the city of Wilmington was awarded a \$17 million RAISE grant to build the appropriate infrastructure for vehicles, pedestrians and bicycles along the riverfront in support of a larger riverfront development project. While monthly land use discussions have continued with the Federal Highway Administration, the grant agreement discussions have not yet resumed.

Secretary Duffy, if you can clarify, you said this is not on hold, but is one of the challenges because it is multi-modal transportation?

Mr. DUFFY. No. I appreciate the question, Senator. This is one of the issues that this project is, for the Wilmington RAISE grant, it was announced in 2021. This is an old one. I have been there for 2 months. I will commit to working with you and your team and our team to make sure we get the grant agreement written and get the project going.

With the 2-months I have been there, I am not the holdup, it is 3 years in the making to get us here. I think it is fair for you to go, well, I do not care about the past 3 years, I care about what you are going to do for me today. I am going to work with you to deliver for you and this administration.

Senator BLUNT ROCHESTER. It is interesting; you are actually talking on my behalf, what you think I might be thinking. I am just saying, this is an important project to Delaware.

Mr. DUFFY. Yes.

Senator BLUNT ROCHESTER. I just want to confirm that it is part of a larger picture. It also includes flood mitigation and protection. I just want to make sure that our teams can work together to make

sure that the talks continue and that we get this implemented for Delaware.

Mr. DUFFY. Absolutely.

Senator BLUNT ROCHESTER. I see some folks in the audience who have their bike rider shirts on. I am also very much supportive of programs like the Safe Streets and Roads for All and the Neighborhood Access and Equity program. These investments have helped, as I mentioned, safety. We think about the safety of cyclists as well as pedestrians.

We hope that you will also focus on these grants and making sure that this money is not politicized. I know there was an internal memo that talked about the different things that would be potentially on the chopping block. We hope that our cyclists and pedestrians as well as those who are traveling are safe.

Thank you, and I yield back.

Mr. DUFFY. Thank you, Senator.

Senator CAPITO. Thank you.

I want to thank you, and Secretary Duffy, I want to thank you. We do not have any further questions, so I would really like to thank you. Your whole testimony was really, I think, goes back to your House roots, realizing that all politics is local for all of us. You did your homework before you came on all of our various projects.

We really appreciate that. From what I have heard everywhere, the responsiveness has been amazing.

Senators who wish to submit questions for the record have until 5 p.m. on Wednesday, April 16th, to do so. The responses to those questions are due back to the committee are due back to the committee no later than close of business on Wednesday, April 30th, and will be submitted for the record.

Senator WHITEHOUSE. Let me just thank you, Chairman, for what I consider to be a refreshing outbreak of normal today.

[Laughter.]

Senator WHITEHOUSE. Thank you, Secretary.

Mr. DUFFY. Thank you all. I am very grateful.

Senator CAPITO. Thank you, Secretary.

This meeting is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 11:36 a.m., the hearing was adjourned.]