

OPENING STATEMENT

The Honorable Ben Quayle (R-AZ), Chairman

Subcommittee on Technology and Innovation

Transportation Research Priorities: Maximizing Return on Investment of Taxpayer Dollars

June 14, 2011

The research and development activities at the Department of Transportation (DOT) are vital to the nation's prosperity - these efforts support critical infrastructure, and enhance both our economic competitiveness, and way of life. The pathway forward for these programs continues to present significant challenges for Congress. We need to ask difficult questions to determine how best to address the issues facing our aging infrastructure within the limitations of our current budget environment.

The DOT annually supports more than \$600 million in research, development, and technology deployment (RD&T) activities focused on surface modes of transportation. These programs were last authorized in 2005 and are primarily supported through the Highway Trust Fund and Mass Transit Fund. However, since 2009, funding shortfalls have required us to transfer nearly \$30 billion from the general fund to maintain all of our highway programs.

Advancements in materials and technology can help achieve long-term cost savings by reducing congestion, and improving the durability and lifespan of our transportation projects. It is therefore critical that we find a way to maintain a healthy, substantive research base behind our state and local transportation initiatives.

Concerns have been raised about how research priorities are identified and the means used to quantify and measure performance. Today's hearing provides an opportunity for us to examine if our research activities are well executed and integrated across the Department, and whether they are efficiently addressing the long-term research and technology needs of the country.

I would like to thank our witnesses for coming today and sharing your thoughts on how to improve our transportation networks and research activities. I look forward to starting a dialogue today, and hope you will continue to work with us to maximize the effectiveness of these programs as we attempt to reauthorize our federal surface transportation programs.