

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

I would like to thank Chairman Mica for holding today’s hearing on MAP-21. This important bipartisan legislation included important provisions that consolidated surface transportation programs and mandated the use of performance management measures. Congress has an essential oversight role in ensuring that these good government reforms are implemented properly, and I look forward to hearing from our witnesses today on the state of that implementation.

Last week, I was proud to join 358 of my colleagues in the House to pass a bipartisan long-term transportation bill, known as the “Fixing America’s Surface Transportation Act” or the “FAST Act.” The FAST Act authorizes approximately \$300 billion to be invested in Federal highway and public transit projects over the next five years. Most importantly, this bipartisan Act addressed my three transportation policy priorities – it provides States and industry with certainty, it strengthens public safety and invests in innovative, multi-modal transit solutions.

When I travel home to Illinois’ 8th Congressional District, my local transportation community is constantly asking me why Washington can’t come together to compromise and develop long-term solutions. They have grown frustrated with short-term, “kick the can” Band-Aid fixes that prevent States and local governments from effectively planning long-term projects. So, I’m pleased that Congress has worked in a bipartisan manner to craft legislation that includes five years of funding at adequate levels.

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

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

In my view, investing in American infrastructure is the ultimate taxpayer win-win. It sustains well-paying American transportation industry jobs, and it creates new ones. Investing in American infrastructure is one of most effective fiscal policy options to increase economic growth and employment.

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

At the same time, the American Society of Civil Engineers gave America's roads a grade of "D" in its 2013 infrastructure report card. Furthermore, ASCE's 2014 Report Card for my home state of Illinois, the findings are just as disturbing. The report states, quote, severe traffic congestion costs Illinois' economy billions of dollars in lost productivity each year. Congestion is estimated to cost \$4 billion annually for the Chicago area alone, and 42 percent of Illinois' major roads are in poor or mediocre condition. Driving on these roads costs Illinois motorists \$3.7 billion a year in extra vehicle repairs and operating costs. This is unacceptable. The FAST Act is a step in the right direction to address this problem, but further action is needed.

It is my hope that over the next five years, Congress can work in a bipartisan fashion to develop a truly sustainable and long-term infrastructure solution for our nation. **Throughout history, our country's economic growth has been driven by significant infrastructure investments – from the construction of the Erie Canal in 1807, to the creation of the Transcontinental Railroad in 1869, to President Eisenhower's visionary establishment of the Interstate Highway System in the 1950s. It is our responsibility to preserve this proud legacy and continue making important investments that will enhance America's ability to thrive and compete well into the 21st Century.**