

Chairman Tom Latham
Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies
House Committee on Appropriations
Department of Transportation FY 2013 Budget Request
March 8, 2012
Opening Statement: As Prepared

The Subcommittee will come to order.

Today we welcome Secretary of Transportation Ray LaHood to the THUD Subcommittee to testify on behalf of DOT's fiscal year 2013 budget request. We look forward to your testimony. Due to a shortened hearing schedule and hopefully an early mark-up schedule, we weren't able to schedule the separate DOT modes for individual hearings. However, we are providing members the opportunity to question the Secretary today, and we will hear from a panel of DOT administrators – highway, transit, rail and aviation on Thursday, March 22nd.

This year the Department is requesting authority to spend almost \$74 billion in fiscal year 2013. Last year, we went around and around on when we would see DOT's legislative proposal text and a pay for to fund the 2012 program. Great debate went into who was going to have a successful authorization bill before the trust fund went broke. Well, like the saying goes: just when you thought it couldn't get any worse, sure enough, it does.

We seem to be at a crossroads – literally – with the future of investment in transportation infrastructure and financial solvency in the balance. So far we aren't seeing any proposals – not in terms of length, cost, financing, or policy that will pass both the House and Senate. I hate to say it, but I don't think the Administration's proposal of using OCO funds, making transportation programs mandatory, or the requirement that livability be used as a criterion for awarding funds will garner the required votes, either.

We need to find a middle ground for everyone. There are a lot of people out there who want to see a robust, long term transportation bill. We also need to pay for it.

Right now the mandatory programs are the largest contributors to our budget problems. Without a long term and realistic or even sensible funding stream, I don't know how we can really advocate for moving transportation over to the mandatory side of the ledger. A lot of Members looking to reduce spending put eliminating the OCO funds at the top of their list of things we can do to reduce the deficit.

I'm looking forward to a lively debate on all things related to the budget – both current and proposed. Welcome again, Mr. Secretary. It's nice to have you back.

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