

**Chairman Hal Rogers**  
**House Committee on Appropriations**  
**Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies**  
**Department of Transportation FY 2013 Budget Request**  
**March 8, 2012**  
**Opening Statement – As Prepared**

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Mr. Chairman, thank you for yielding. Secretary LaHood, thank you for taking the time to come before this committee to discuss your budget request for FY2013. I am very glad to hear of your son's safe return from Egypt. I know that situation must have been a terrible ordeal for him and your family.

As you know, this is a very historic time for our country and tough decisions are being undertaken by this committee. This committee has the task of appropriating and overseeing the discretionary funding that is allocated to federal agencies in the Executive Branch. Anyone can look at our nation's \$15 trillion debt and realize that we have a spending problem. We are borrowing 40 cents out of every dollar, and most of those funds are outside the purview and oversight of this committee. Today, mandatory spending accounts for nearly two thirds of our annual budgets. While I am proud of the job this committee has done to cut discretionary spending by some \$95 billion in two years, more broadly as policy-makers, we must also look to mandatory spending and entitlements as we continue to address this problem.

Your department oversees the critical transportation infrastructure of the nation. My district in the heart of Southern and Eastern Kentucky feels the effects of transportation projects acutely. Decisions about whether or not to build a highway, or to repave or widen mountain roadways, can not only affect commerce for communities but also the safety of our citizens who travel on these roads every day. And while many areas of the country seem focused on funding bike paths or light rail, there are many areas in the country like mine that still lack for decent roads or access to an interstate that can get them to the nearest city. We cannot let these communities get lost in the shuffle.

Of course, no discussion about the challenges we face in transportation is complete without mentioning the recent spike in gas prices. Upward pressure at the pump is putting a serious damper on our economy, and places a heavy burden on rural Americans who tend to drive longer distances to get to their jobs. With energy prices often the top line on family budgets and so vital for small businesses that will spur our economy back into action, I am hopeful that this administration will break the stranglehold it has on our country's vast domestic resources to help lift this heavy burden. It is an issue that affects not only transportation, but our national security and our economic future.

Finally, as you are no doubt aware, the authorizing committees in the House and Senate are working towards a long-overdue reauthorization of our surface transportation programs. Given the significant challenge in making the highway trust fund solvent at a time of necessary fiscal austerity, I strongly believe that leadership, innovative thinking and collaboration across and aisle and across Pennsylvania Avenue is urgently needed.

I look forward to working with your department and this Administration to find solutions to these issues so vital to our economic prosperity. Though from where I sit, I fear that if we cannot get the problem of mandatory spending under control, it will not be long before we simply cannot pay for the transportation projects and programs so many of our constituents enjoy.

Thank you for being with us today. I look forward to hearing your comments on these issues.

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