

Opening Statement
Rep. Adrian Smith (R-NE), Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Technology and Innovation
Markup
H.R. 2569 - Transportation R&D
July 15, 2009

Mr. Chairman, thank you for holding this markup today on H.R. 2569, to reauthorize surface transportation R&D activities at the Department of Transportation. I appreciate your active efforts to maximize the subcommittee's influence on the R&D title of the highway bill, holding hearings and developing a robust record of committee action.

I hope, through this markup and a markup at full committee, we can arrive at a product we can all support and eventually incorporate into the highway bill as it moves forward. However, as it stands right now I have significant concerns with the bill which I hope we can address either today at subcommittee or later at full committee. Generally, these concerns fall into three categories.

First: spending. With record deficits and a mountain of debt looming in the background and threatening both short- and long-term economic stability, it is clear we need to practice some fiscal restraint. Unfortunately, on most issues in Congress—and with the highway bill in particular—the eagerness to spend taxpayers' money trumps any concerns over balancing the nation's checkbook. I hope this bill doesn't become a smaller reflection of this problem, but as drafted I am concerned we continue to create and expand government spending without regard to how we will pay for it.

Another concern is this legislation's emphasis on climate change. While I'm not necessarily opposed to DOT R&D on climate change, I question it as a priority relative to other well-established areas of study, such as research on safety, advanced materials, congestion reduction, and more. Further, I want to ensure any research on "emissions reduction strategies"—which clearly has significant policy and regulatory implications—fully considers not only the potential reductions in CO₂ emissions, but also the tradeoffs associated with the "strategies" to reduce such emissions, such as economic burdens on businesses and consumers. For example, how would particular "emissions reduction strategies" impact rural areas or agriculture or the trucking industry?

Last, I am concerned the bill mandates "community livability" as a focus area for DOT R&D programs. The term is extremely vague, and not defined in the legislation. To the extent we do have a definition, though, it is troubling: Transportation Secretary LaHood has said "livability" involves coercing people out of their cars. I think we can safely assume most Americans

wouldn't consider the government forcing them out of their vehicles as something which improves their "livability." Accordingly, I want to ensure the DOT R&D portfolio is aimed at *positively* impacting Americans' lifestyles, not limiting basic freedoms to live, work, and commute as they please.

Again, I thank you Mr. Chairman for holding this markup, and I look forward to working with you today and at full committee to improve this bill. Also, Mr. Chairman, I would like to engage the subcommittee counsel in a discussion regarding the references to "community livability" in the bill when you call up the bill.