



COMMITTEE ON
SCIENCE, SPACE, & TECHNOLOGY
Lamar Smith, Chairman

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Statement of Chairwoman Barbara Comstock (R-Va.)

Subcommittee Markup of:

*Committee Print of the “Surface Transportation Research and Development Act of 2015”
H.R. 2886, the “Future Transportation Research and Innovation for Prosperity Act”*

Chairwoman Comstock: It was almost exactly three months ago that I chaired a hearing in this Subcommittee on issues related to surface transportation research and development. The testimonies we heard from witnesses at that hearing were extremely helpful to me in crafting my legislation up for consideration today.

Highlights of the Surface Transportation Research and Development Act of 2015 include:

- Making the reduction of traffic congestion a priority area of research and development within the U.S. Department of Transportation. This area of research is of particular significance not just to my constituents, but Americans throughout the Nation. According to the 2015 Urban Mobility Scorecard:

“The national congestion recess is over....In the biggest regions and most congested corridors, traffic jams can occur at any hour, weekdays or weekends. The problems that travelers and shippers face include extra travel time, extra cost from wasted fuel and lost productivity and increasing unreliability where bad weather, roadwork, a malfunctioning traffic signal, a local event or a small accident or stalled vehicle can result in major delays.”

My constituents in Loudoun, Fairfax, Prince William, Clarke, and Frederick Counties can attest to that. The report also discusses how Transportation Research and Technology also saves money and time for families.

- For example: The 2015 scoreboard lists Washington, D.C. Metro Area the most congested in the nation with automobile drivers spending 82 hours a year stuck in delays. That does not include standard travel time. The cost of this congestion also costs drivers to spend an additional 1,834 dollars a year on commute costs. Better roads and less congestion leads to families spending less at the pumps, on vehicle maintenance, and gets them home faster, safer to enjoy time with their loved ones.
- The bill also prioritizes research and development activities within the Department of Transportation. It is important that we identify ways to maintain a healthy, substantive research base for our state and local transportation initiatives.
- My bill requires the Assistant Secretary for Research and Technology to play a more significant role in the Department’s research planning and development, and provides direction to make research at the Department multi-modal, non-duplicative and transparent.

- Further, the bill Directs the Department to study the state of rail safety technologies and identify alternative technologies that can achieve the safety goals of Positive Train Control requirements, but that could potentially be implemented sooner than PTC systems. While by law PTC technology is required on 60,000 miles of railroad track by the end of this year, many railroads are likely to miss the deadline.

As a Representative of a district filled with a diverse group of transportation challenges, and as a Member of the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, I seek to shepherd language from today's bills into the larger surface transportation legislation that Congress will hopefully be able to pass later this year. To that end, I look forward to working with the Ranking Member of this Subcommittee, Mr. Lipinski, who is also a Member of the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee. As he is also the author of the other bill on today's agenda, I have no doubt that we will both be engaged in these discussions. I urge my colleagues to support both bills today, so that we may provide the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee with comprehensive research and development language to incorporate in its legislation.