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U.S. Department of Transportation
Testimony Before the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
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Chairman Graves, Ranking Member Larsen, and all the Members of this Committee: thank you for the opportunity to testify today—and for your continued partnership.

Before I begin, I want to take a moment to remember Representative Donald Payne Jr. He was a pleasure to work with, and a constant champion for more accessible and resilient transportation. He will be greatly missed.

Just three short years ago, I was making the case for the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law in front of this committee. Now we're in the middle of an infrastructure decade unlike anything this country has seen since the Eisenhower Administration. I'm proud to report that we are now supporting more than 50,000 transportation projects in all 50 states, D.C., Puerto Rico and all U.S. territories.

Our country has chosen to end decades of underinvestment. And I would like to share a few examples of what this new level of investment in infrastructure means to the American people and economy.

I'll start with the Brent Spence Bridge between Kentucky and Ohio, one of the 9,400 bridge projects nationwide. Anyone who's traveled along I-71 and I-75 knows this bridge is a critical thoroughfare—it's also one of the worst trucking bottlenecks in the country. Improvements have been talked about for years, and this Administration is finally making them happen. Just last month, the project cleared its comprehensive environmental review and the construction that will upgrade the existing bridge and break ground on a new, companion bridge will start soon.

When it comes to rail, we're modernizing and upgrading our freight and passenger rail systems to make them safer. Across every region of this country, we're building new tunnels, expanding routes, and upgrading tracks. Through the Railroad Crossing Elimination program—a first-of-its-kind initiative created by President Biden's infrastructure package—we're improving or eliminating over 400 railroad crossings. In addition to cutting the inconvenience of waiting for a train to pass, these projects are creating safer crossing options for drivers and pedestrians.

We're also using our authority to make our freight rail system safer. Earlier this year we issued final rules to require emergency escape breathing apparatuses for trains carrying hazardous materials, and to establish minimum safety requirements for train crew size. We have conducted 7,500 focused inspections along high-hazard flammable train routes, issued safety advisories, and developed a new rule to require railroads to provide real-time information to first responders when a hazmat incident occurs.

Turning to aviation, airports of all sizes are undergoing major upgrades to meet the increasing number of people flying. I've seen some of this work first-hand in recent months. I was in Georgia in April to celebrate a construction milestone for the new Terminal D at the Atlanta Airport—done without major service disruptions, which is big when you're the busiest airport in the world. In May, I got to see the

work going on at Missoula Airport in Montana, where they're updating an 80+ year old terminal to match current passenger capacity—and ultimately offer more flights, recruit more airlines, and keep travel costs down for passengers. And under the leadership of FAA Administrator Mike Whitaker, we have refocused the oversight of Boeing—and we will continue to hold Boeing accountable as they carry out their action plan and regain trust on safety and quality improvements.

A little over two weeks ago, I joined leaders in Maryland to celebrate the reopening of the Port of Baltimore. After the shocking collapse of the Francis Scott Key Bridge in late March, we quickly released emergency funding to put toward rebuilding the bridge. We worked closely with county, local, and state governments, as well as other partners, to help mitigate the impact on our supply chains while this critical port was temporarily closed. And now, less than 100 days later, the Port of Baltimore is once again fully open and fully operational.

Put simply: there's a lot of important work going on right now. Our work is making our communities more accessible. Our work is creating good-paying jobs all across the country and keeping our supply chains strong. And our work has helped lower the number of traffic fatalities on our roads for seven straight quarters and continues to make all of our transportation systems safer for everyone who uses them.

There is much more to be done and we need the continued partnership of this Committee and the Congress to fully realize the potential of this new infrastructure era.

I want to thank this Committee for getting the FAA Reauthorization passed and to President Biden's desk. Thanks to your bipartisan leadership, the FAA has critical resources that will further modernize our aviation infrastructure and keep our aviation system the safest and most efficient in the world. I'm also pleased that this law protects the automatic refunds rule and supports other consumer protection work this Department has fought so hard for, like getting rid of fees parents have had to pay to sit next to their young children on a flight.

Yet this country needs similar bipartisan leadership when it comes to rail safety. As I mentioned, this Department is doing everything possible under our existing authority to upgrade and modernize our rail infrastructure and make operations safer.

But we need to set even higher standards, and we need Congress to pass the Railway Safety Act to make tracks, cars, and working conditions safer for those who work on freight rail—and to protect those who live in the surrounding communities.

And I know we can get it done, because the last 3.5 years have been a testament to what's possible when our Department works closely with this Committee.

With your partnership, we can keep this momentum going, we can deliver good projects for more communities, and we can build and rebuild our transportation systems to meet the 21st, and even 22nd, century needs of Americans.

Thank you, and I look forward to your questions.