

Testimony of Congressman Zach Nunn (IA-03)
Member Day – House Transportation & Infrastructure Committee
119th Congress

Chairman Graves, Ranking Member Larsen - thank you for the opportunity to join you and share a few priorities that matter deeply to Iowans.

Back home in Iowa's Third District, we've got a little bit of everything – rural towns, growing cities, and key freight routes that keep our economy moving. Whether it's a farmer hauling grain to market or a local mayor trying to keep their main street from crumbling, the message is the same: Iowan's need infrastructure that works, and they need Washington to be a steady partner, not a roadblock.

Keep Federal Funding Predictable and Flexible

Since the last time we reauthorized a surface transportation bill, we've seen major increases in construction costs and face continuing supply chain challenges. If we want to keep up, we've got to invest at a level that reflects the facts on the ground.

More than that, how the money gets out the door matters. Formula funding works. It's predictable, fast, and allows our state DOTs and local partners to plan ahead and actually get shovels in the ground. On the other hand, discretionary grant programs often feel like a lottery. Our local guys pour in staff time and money just to apply, and often walk away with nothing to show for it.

Let's prioritize core formula programs and give states the flexibility to move funds where they're needed most without all the red tape that has built up over the years.

Cut Red Tape and Let Locals Build

Ask any local official in my district what's slowing them down, and they'll tell you: process. Environmental reviews that drag on for years. Reports no one reads. Federal rules that sound good in theory but ultimately just add cost without adding value.

We have a great opportunity to address these problems by streamlining project delivery and cutting unnecessary regulations. For example, under current law, if a project has already gone through an environmental review and a new rule comes out in the middle of the process, they have to restart the entire review. That's not efficient. That's government red tape at its worst.

Support Rural Freight and Agriculture Corridors

In Iowa, transportation is agriculture. Our farmers and manufacturers rely on solid roads to keep things moving. That's why I'm asking for a couple of commonsense updates to federal law that would really help Iowa farmers:

- Grant Iowa authority to issue permits for vehicles up to 108,000 pounds on a key segment of Interstate 380 – something other states are already doing.
- If state highways get added to the Interstate system, let the trucks that already use them keep operating without new weight limits. If they were operating safely before, that's not going to change overnight.

These aren't radical changes – they're practical steps that keep our supply chains running and our costs down.

Invest in Rural Innovation

Iowa's been a leader in using technology to manage traffic, improve safety, and make every dollar count. Let's build on that. The next bill should make it easier to use federal funds for smart infrastructure, keep investing in research, and make sure we've got clear standards around vehicle connectivity and data – especially for rural areas that are doing more with less.

Conclusion

This committee knows better than anyone: infrastructure is not a red or blue issue. It's about being able to get your kid to school safely. It's about getting goods to market. It's about small towns having a shot at growth.

Iowa is ready to innovate. We just need Congress to hand us the right tools. Thank you again for your leadership, and I look forward to working with this Committee to move these priorities forward.

Respectfully,

Congressman Zach Nunn (IA-03)