

**Chairman Susan M. Collins Opening Statement  
Committee on Appropriations Subcommittee on Transportation,  
Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies**

**Markup of the FY2017 Transportation, Housing and Urban Development,  
and Related Agencies Appropriations Act**

**April 19, 2016**

*(As prepared for delivery)*

The Subcommittee will come to order. Today, we will mark up the Fiscal Year 2017 Transportation, and Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies Appropriations bill.

I have worked closely with the Ranking Member, Senator Reed, in drafting this bill, which also includes input from Members on both sides of the aisle.

Through considerable negotiation and compromise, this bipartisan bill makes important investments in our nation's infrastructure, helps meet the housing needs of the most vulnerable among us, and provides funding for economic development projects that create jobs in our communities.

The fiscal year 2017 Transportation and Housing Appropriations bill provides \$56.5 billion, which is \$3 billion less than the President's request. Again this year, the Administration has shifted more than \$7 billion in transportation programs from discretionary to mandatory, a gimmick the Subcommittee has rejected. The Appropriations Committee continues to face constraints that require difficult decisions to be made regarding funding at a time when resources are limited under the 2015 budget agreement. This Subcommittee, in particular, faces challenges stemming from unavoidable increases for rental assistance for low-income families and disabled and elderly individuals. In fact, housing assistance consumes more than half of our allocation and is 84 percent of HUD's budget.

Our priority is to ensure that our nation's most vulnerable individuals and families do not lose assistance that otherwise could cause them to become homeless. Therefore, the bill provides necessary funding to keep pace with the rising cost of housing vulnerable families.

Senator Reed and I also share a strong commitment to reducing and ending homelessness and have included \$2.33 billion for Homeless Assistance Grants.

We remain concerned about homeless youth and provide \$40 million for grants targeting this underserved population. Additionally, to better support youth exiting the foster care system, the bill includes \$20 million for Family Unification vouchers and makes changes to the program to improve its effectiveness. I know this issue is of particular concern to many members who share my concern that young people who "age out" of the foster care program may have nowhere safe to go.

For our nation's homeless veterans, the bill provides \$57 million, including \$7 million to serve our Native American veterans living on tribal lands. Despite the Administration, once again, eliminating this program, the Subcommittee continues to provide funding recognizing that while veterans' homelessness has decreased by 36 percent since 2010, we have yet to reach the goal of ending homelessness among our veterans. As the percentage of homeless veterans continues to decrease, less funding will be needed.

Another important issue addressed by the bill is lead paint in homes, which is of particular concern to families with children under the age of six. The bill requires HUD to expeditiously complete its rulemaking to update its lead standards based on the 2012 C.D.C. guidelines, an action Senator Reed and I requested in a February letter to the HUD Secretary.

While this bill helps families in need, it also reflects the hardships local communities are facing. Boosting local economies is critical to job creation and helping families obtain financial security. Our bill supports local development efforts by providing \$3 billion through Community Development Block Grants and \$950 million to the HOME program. These programs are very important among states and communities as they support the development of affordable housing and other infrastructure projects, which promote economic development and lead to job creation.

In transportation, the bill provides \$525 million for the oversubscribed TIGER grant program, which supports not only much-needed infrastructure projects but also jobs and economic growth as well. Last year, 625 applicants from all 50 states and territories requested nearly \$10 billion in assistance, demonstrating the need for and popularity of this program.

To continue to ensure that our nation's air space remains the safest in the world, \$16.4 billion is provided for the F.A.A. Funding is increased to continue to modernize the nation's air traffic control system. Additional funding is provided to support the research and safe integration of unmanned aircraft systems into the nation's airspace system, building upon this Subcommittee's oversight hearing last October. The hearing raised questions about the potential interference of drones with commercial aircraft, such as the reported incident at London's Heathrow Airport this past weekend.

Consistent with the FAST Act, \$44 billion is made available for the Federal-aid highway programs, including the new freight program and FAST LANE grants for critical freight and highway projects.

I also want to highlight several safety-related provisions included in the bill that will enhance the safety of commercial motor carrier vehicles. The Department continues to delay its proposed rule on speed governors, which will improve safety on our nation's roadways by preventing commercial truck and bus drivers from speeding. The bill once again requires the Department to issue the proposed rule expeditiously, since they have already missed the deadline Congress imposed in the fiscal year 2016 Omnibus.

The growth of autonomous vehicle technologies, or “driverless cars,” has led the Department to re-examine existing regulations and policies that could affect the safe deployment of these vehicles. The bill provides additional funding to ensure the safe deployment of autonomous vehicles and reduce cybersecurity vulnerabilities in their electronics.

The bill also builds on the critical investments in rail infrastructure and safety made by this Subcommittee during the past two years. Fifty million is provided for railroad safety to address the ongoing problem of rail accidents throughout the nation. Additional funding is provided to help address the nation’s substantial backlog of rail infrastructure needing repairs.

These are merely highlights of some of the programs included in the bill. We will face many challenges before this bill becomes law, but I am committed to advancing this bill.

I would like to thank my staff and Senator Reed and his staff for their hard work in drafting this bi-partisan bill. I also want to thank the members of this Subcommittee who have provided valuable input, as is reflected in the bill before us today.

I urge my colleagues to support the T-HUD bill today and on Thursday in the full Committee.

In keeping with the tradition of the Subcommittee, I would ask members to refrain from offering amendments until the full Committee markup on Thursday, but Senator Reed and I would appreciate knowing of any such amendments as soon as possible so that we may begin working with our colleagues.

With that, I turn to Senator Reed for his remarks.

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