

Rep. Phil Gingrey
Opening Statement for Transportation Infrastructure Hearing
Subcommittee on Technology & Innovation
June 24, 2008

Good morning Mr. Chairman. I want to first thank you for holding this hearing today that touches the lives of so many Americans on a daily basis. I am pleased to work with you as we continue this Subcommittee's efforts to improve our nation's transportation infrastructure through innovative research and development activities that will hopefully result in a windfall of cost savings for our nation.

While the importance of our roads and highways to our economy and way of life are self-evident, I would like to take a moment to document for the Subcommittee the extent of their impact. There are approximately 4 million miles of roads in this country and Americans drive approximately 4 trillion miles per year. Furthermore, there are over 200 million cars and light trucks on the road, and a further 8 million trucks on the roads supporting our businesses. Overall, transportation related activities currently account for 10% of our GDP.

To support all this traffic, government expenditures on our highways are approximately \$140 billion annually. Unfortunately, even with this constant influx of revenues, our infrastructure cannot support our growing traffic needs.

According to the Urban Mobility Report published by Dr. Poe's Texas Transportation Institute (TTI), drivers in the Atlanta Metropolitan area spend an average of 60 hours per year stuck in traffic and waste approximately 44 gallons of fuel in the process. With gas prices currently at \$4.07 per gallon for regular gas, this equates to almost \$200 per driver that is wasted when families are struggling to pay for the rising energy costs.

Metropolitan Atlanta has similar congestion to the Washington, DC and San Francisco areas, and only Los Angeles has a greater congestion problem. Congestion – as we know – is not limited to our major cities. Nationally, TTI estimates that congestion on our nation's roads resulted in 2.9 billion gallons of wasted fuel in 2007 and a \$78 billion drain on the U.S. economy.

Congestion aside, our transportation infrastructure accounts for a significant portion of our total energy consumption. Civilian transportation consumes nearly 9 million barrels of petroleum per day for gasoline, twice the amount of industrial uses. With oil prices at \$135 per barrel the total cost is a staggering \$1.2 billion per day.

Despite the numerous challenges presented by our transportation infrastructure, researchers across America are working, right now, on reducing our energy consumption and easing our congestion problems. Our panel will describe many technologies that can improve the condition and sustainability of our highways, both in the short and long terms.

The priority of research and development in the transportation sector has lagged behind construction and rehabilitation. The challenges that now face our transportation infrastructure will require innovative designs and technologies. I am eager to hear the panel's thoughts on how effective R&D activities have been in the past and how R&D should be included in the next transportation bill.

Chairman Wu, again, thank you for holding this hearing and I yield back the balance of my time.