



Committee: Senate Environment & Public Works Subcommittee on Transportation Infrastructure
Event: [The Road Ahead: Proposals to Improve America's Transportation Infrastructure](#)
Date: July 23, 2025
Time: 3:00 PM
Place: 562 Dirksen Senate Office Building

Member Toplines:

[Chair Kevin Cramer \(R-ND\)](#): Cramer emphasized the need for practical, bipartisan policies in the next surface transportation reauthorization, including maintaining robust formula funding to support rural states like North Dakota. He highlighted three recent bills focused on cutting regulatory red tape, improving state flexibility, and enhancing safety—particularly for children walking or biking to school: The Transportation Asset Management Simplification Act ([S.1167](#)), Highway Funding Transferability Act ([S.1733](#)), and Safe Routes Improvement Act ([S.1828](#)). Cramer also called for revisiting the One Federal Decision framework to accelerate project delivery and improve federal-state partnerships.

*Ranking Member Angela Alsobrooks (D-MD)*¹: Alsobrooks opened by highlighting the importance of balancing infrastructure modernization with safety, equity, and sustainability in the upcoming surface transportation reauthorization. She pointed to Maryland's progress under the *Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act* (IIJA), including \$63 million for EV charging expansion and major upgrades to bridges and commuter rail. Alsobrooks also discussed the Highway Funding Transferability Improvement Act ([S.1733](#)), which she co-sponsored with Cramer to give states more flexibility in allocating federal highway funds. She called for targeted federal investments that reflect state-specific priorities and support safer, more efficient, and resilient transportation systems.

Witness Toplines:

[Marisa Jones, Managing Director, Safe Routes Partnership](#): Jones urged Congress to include the Safe Routes to School Improvement Act ([S.1828](#)) in the upcoming surface transportation reauthorization. She highlighted alarming child pedestrian fatality rates and emphasized the cost-effectiveness and safety benefits of Safe Routes programs, particularly when supported by dedicated state-level coordinators. Jones cited successful implementation in both rural and urban communities, including long-standing programs in North Dakota, and stressed that restoring coordinator roles is a revenue-neutral way to expand access and ensure federal dollars deliver local impact.

[Chad Orn, Deputy Director of Planning, North Dakota Department of Transportation](#): Orn called for greater flexibility in the federal highway program to help states deliver projects more

¹ Opening statement was not available online at the time of this memo's distribution.

efficiently, particularly in rural areas with short construction seasons and limited staff. He endorsed several bipartisan bills, including the Highway Funding Transferability Improvement Act ([S.1733](#)), Transportation Asset Management Simplification Act ([S.1167](#)), and Safe Routes to School Improvement Act ([S.1828](#)), and supported the Highway Funding Flexibility Act ([S.1066](#)), which would allow unused EV charging funds to be repurposed for highway and bridge projects. Orn urged Congress to increase formula-based funding, streamline environmental reviews through reforms like the SPEED Act ([S.1894](#)), and address burdensome federal regulations and data collection requirements. He emphasized that robust investment paired with reduced bureaucracy would maximize safety, economic benefits, and national connectivity.

Samantha Biddle, Deputy Secretary, Maryland Department of Transportation: Biddle emphasized the need for flexible, multimodal federal transportation policy to support Maryland's integrated system spanning roads, transit, ports, and aviation. She endorsed the Highway Funding Transferability Improvement Act ([S.1733](#)) as a key tool to align federal dollars with local needs, including EV charging, transit upgrades, and coastal infrastructure. Biddle also supported the Safe Routes Improvement Act ([S.1828](#)) to strengthen child pedestrian safety and formalize coordinator roles that facilitate local project delivery. Looking ahead, she urged Congress to maintain IIJA investments in resilience and electrification and to prioritize predictable, formula-based funding across all transportation modes.

Major Takeaways:

Senators emphasized that surface transportation policy must accommodate the diverse needs of states.

- Sen. **Pete Ricketts** (R-NE) underscored the value of flexibility in transferring funding across different infrastructure types, noting Nebraska's reliance on rail, roads, and airports rather than ports.
- Sen. **Shelley Moore Capito** (R-WV) similarly stressed that states should not be expected to build infrastructure the same way, citing differing needs between West Virginia, North Dakota, and Maryland.
- Alsobrooks supported flexibility, but emphasized that it must be balanced with transparency to ensure investments reach underserved communities.

Lawmakers flagged the slow implementation of EV infrastructure under NEVI.

- Sen. **Cynthia Lummis** (R-WY) promoted her bill, the Highway Funding Flexibility Act ([S.1066](#)), to allow states to redirect stalled NEVI funds to highway and bridge projects, noting significant unobligated balances.
- Lummis also underscored how such flexibility could deliver more immediate public benefits from a transportation management perspective.

Permitting delays were highlighted as a key obstacle to timely project delivery.

- Ricketts pointed out Nebraska's success using Lean Six Sigma to cut air permit review times from 190 to 65 days without changing environmental standards.
- Capito and Cramer emphasized the importance of bipartisan permitting reform, with Cramer specifically highlighting the need for coordinated environmental reviews under a "one decision, one agency" model.
- Lummis championed the SPEED Act ([S.1894](#)), which would double categorical exclusion thresholds to counteract inflation and reduce regulatory bottlenecks for small projects.
- Cramer and Alsobrooks echoed the need for better implementation and coordination to enhance program reach and safety outcomes.