



Committee: House Science, Space & Technology Committee
Event: [Full Committee Markup of H.R. 8748, H.R. 8790, and H.R. 7129](#)
Date: May 20, 2026

Executive Summary: On May 20, 2026, the House Science, Space & Technology Committee held a markup of three bipartisan bills focused on transportation research, geothermal energy, and water power: the Surface Transportation Research & Development Act of 2026 ([H.R. 8748](#)); the Next-Generation Geothermal Research & Development Act ([H.R. 8790](#)); and the Water Power Research & Development Re-Authorization Act ([H.R. 7129](#)). All three bills, along with several amendments, were approved by voice votes.

Member Toplines:

[Chairman Brian Babin \(R-TX-36\)](#): Babin praised the legislation under consideration for focusing on advancing American research, innovation, infrastructure, and energy capabilities. He stressed that updating transportation research and development (R&D), expanding next-generation geothermal technologies, and modernizing water power are critical to the nation's economic growth, public safety, and long-term competitiveness.

[Ranking Member Zoe Lofgren \(D-CA-18\)](#): Lofgren expressed enthusiastic support for all three bills. However, she expressed frustration that very few Democratic-led bills have received markups or Republican co-sponsorship this Congress despite her staff and Democratic Members working to find bipartisan compromises on Republican-led bills before the Committee. Lofgren particularly praised the potential of geothermal and hydropower to simultaneously address climate change and energy affordability concerns.

Legislation Considered:

Surface Transportation Research & Development Act of 2026 ([H.R. 8748](#))

I. Member Toplines:

- Reps. **Vince Fong** (R-CA-20) and **Emilia Sykes** (D-OH-13), the co-sponsors of the bill, spoke in support of H.R. 8748.
 - Fong argued that the bill keeps the Department of Transportation (DOT) focused on the future by reauthorizing critical R&D programs, strengthening university partnerships, addressing emerging safety concerns – such as vehicle lighting technologies – and studying more durable road and rail materials.
 - Sykes highlighted the reauthorization of the Rail Cooperative Research Program to tackle freight rail safety and the transportation of hazardous materials. She noted this effort is essential to prevent another tragedy like the 2023 train derailment in East Palestine, Ohio.

II. Amendments:

- [Oberholte 066](#) - Requires DOT to establish a working group to review and establish guidance and best practices for electric vehicle (EV) fires.
 - Rep. **Jay Oberholte** (R-CA-23) argued that EV fires pose unique chemical and electrical hazards and that first responders currently lack standardized safety protocols. Lofgren also spoke in support.
 - The amendment was agreed to by voice vote.
- [Riley 055](#) - Directs the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) to develop a comprehensive strategy to strengthen the transit workforce.
 - Rep. **Josh Riley** (D-NY-19) underscored the need to keep workforce development at pace with transportation innovation.
 - The amendment was agreed to by voice vote.
- [Sykes 116](#) - Adds a study on human trafficking prevention efforts.
 - Sykes highlighted that roadways are the most common form of transportation for human traffickers.
 - The amendment was agreed to by voice vote.
- [Webster 037](#) - Directs DOT to study digital infrastructure modernization to improve transportation planning, engineering, and regulatory reform.
 - Rep. **Daniel Webster** (R-FL-11) introduced his amendment. Lofgren supported it and stressed the importance of cybersecurity analysis.
 - The amendment was agreed to by voice vote.
- [Whitesides 052](#) - Supports exploratory advanced research at DOT.
 - Rep. **George Whitesides** (D-CA-27) said his amendment helps translate advanced engineering into real-world applications.
 - The amendment was agreed to by voice vote.
- [Whitesides 053](#) - Adds wildfires to the FTA's infrastructure integrity research.
 - Whitesides warned of the increasing threat of wildfires to the nation's infrastructure and said his amendment would ensure wildfire prevention is covered by DOT R&D investments.
 - The amendment was agreed to by voice vote.
- [Salinas 093](#) - Establishes a task force to address the impact of 6PPD – a chemical used in tires – on the environment.
 - Rep. **Andrea Salinas** (D-OR-06) highlighted the toxicity of 6PPD to salmon and other fish populations. She expressed frustration that there was no path forward for this amendment at the hearing.
 - The amendment was withdrawn.
- [Ross 075](#) - Requires DOT to study and report on underride crashes.
 - Rep. **Deborah Ross** (D-NC-02) warned that “spotty” data on underride crashes prevents effective training of first responders.
 - The amendment was agreed to by voice vote.
- [Foushee 062](#) - Supports low-emissions materials standards and testing.
 - Rep. **Valerie Foushee** (D-NC-04) said her amendment will give states more tools to use innovative building materials. Lofgren also spoke in support of the amendment and noted that cement facilities are a significant contributor to global power plant emissions.
 - The amendment was agreed to by voice vote.

- [Bonamici 099](#) - Authorizes the Transit Vehicle Innovation Deployment Program for next-generation transit technologies, such as hydrogen fuel cell buses.
 - Rep. **Suzanne Bonamici** (D-OR-01) said her amendment would improve passenger safety and support the development of key domestic industries and supply chains.
 - The amendment was agreed to by voice vote.
- Subramanyam 117 - Requires a study on the pricing schemes of private toll roads to investigate excessive pricing.
 - Rep. **Suhas Subramanyam** (D-VA-10) warned that private toll roads are imposing significant costs on communities.

III. *Final Vote on H.R. 8748: Passed out of Committee as amended by voice vote.*

Next-Generation Geothermal Research & Development Act ([H.R. 8790](#))

I. Member Toplines:

- Reps. **Pat Harrigan** (R-NC-10) and Salinas, the bill's co-sponsors, spoke in support of the bill.
 - Harrigan said that next-generation geothermal energy has the potential to deliver 90 gigawatts of power to the U.S. and underscored that unlocking this potential is critical for meeting rising electricity demands.
 - Salinas emphasized that geothermal energy offers clean, 24/7 power that helps encourage the clean energy transition as a backstop for intermittent renewable sources like wind and solar.

II. Amendments:

- [Harrigan 058](#) - Directs the Department of Energy (DOE) to include supercritical geothermal within its FORGE sites and R&D programs.
 - Harrigan praised the potential of supercritical geothermal wells and said his amendments eliminated a technical feasibility loophole to push DOE to support supercritical R&D.
 - The amendment was agreed to by voice vote.
- [Van Epps 117](#) - Directs DOE to prioritize geothermal projects that would power high-load-factor facilities.
 - Rep. **Matt Van Epps** (R-TN-07) highlighted the importance of supporting geothermal projects that can meet the energy needs of high-load-factor facilities such as data centers, semiconductor fabricators, steel mills, wastewater treatment plants, and critical mineral smelters. He said he would withdraw his amendment to allow more work on addressing the energy demands of such facilities.
 - The amendment was withdrawn.

III. *Final Vote on H.R. 8790: Passed out of Committee as amended by voice vote.*

Water Power Research and Development Re-Authorization Act ([H.R. 7129](#))

I. Member Toplines:

- Reps. Bonamici – the bill's sponsor – and **Christian Menefee** (D-TX) spoke in support of H.R. 7129.
 - Bonamici highlighted the enormous untapped potential of marine energy. She pointed to the PacWave wave energy facility in Oregon as a

successful example of long-term federal investment, university partnerships, and community collaboration. She argued that sustained federal leadership is necessary to move innovative water power technologies from testing to commercial deployment while improving grid reliability, lowering energy costs, and supporting manufacturing and workforce development.

- Menefee outlined the massive water strain caused by traditional coal and gas power plants and data centers in Texas. He underscored the importance of investing in water power generation for drought-prone regions to help save fresh water while still meeting energy needs.

II. *Amendments:*

- [Babin 01](#) - Reduces authorization of appropriations to Fiscal Year 2026 levels.
 - Babin thanked Bonamici and Rep. **Nick Begich** (R-AK-AL) for their support of his amendment.
 - The amendment was agreed to by voice vote.

III. *Final Vote on H.R. 7129: **Passed out of Committee as amended by voice vote.***