

Opening Statement
Chairman Steve Chabot
Wednesday, March 21, 2018
AS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY
Hearing: “American Infrastructure and the Small Business Perspective”

Good morning. I call this hearing to order.

Our nation is on the cusp of many major changes in its transportation system. We have seen the development of GPS, companies such as Uber and Lyft, and electric vehicles. These innovations are transforming the movement of people, goods, and services.

But our current transportation infrastructure system is, simply put, stuck in a different generation. And unfortunately, our nation’s small business owners often feel these effects the most. On average, the typical American commuter loses 42 hours of valuable productivity time each year to traffic. Some of us who travel around D.C. might agree that we lose more.

Currently, an estimated 20 percent of federal roads provide poor ride quality and 25 percent of bridges are functionally obsolete. I am willing to bet that every Member in this room can think of at least one urgent infrastructure project in their district that they would like to fix today.

While there are many that come to mind in my district, one that is very important to small business owners alike is the Brent Spence Bridge. This is a bridge that connects Ohio to Kentucky and carries an estimated 172,000 vehicles on Interstates 71 and 75 each day, more than double its intended capacity. To put this bridge’s age into perspective, it was slated to be dedicated during the week of President John F. Kennedy’s assassination. Today, it is labeled functionally obsolete by the U.S. Department of Transportation.

As this Committee has learned in past hearings, broadband deployment is also a crucial part of our nation’s infrastructure, particularly for entrepreneurs in rural areas. As business owners continue to move to a more global marketplace, access to broadband is crucial to keeping small businesses competitive. Unfortunately, about 39 percent of the rural population, or 23 million people, still lack access to broadband internet service considered “fast” by the Federal Communications Commission.

As with any major project, it is critical that small businesses are not left out of the conversation. Small businesses both create and rely upon our nation’s infrastructure system, and as they create 2 out of 3 new jobs, they will likely be a driving force in repairing our broken system. I look forward to hearing from small business owners today and their ideas for moving our nation’s infrastructure into the 21st Century.

I now yield to the Ranking Member, Ms. Velázquez, for her opening statement.

