

STATEMENT

“Greener Communities, Greater Opportunities: New Ideas for Sustainable Development and Economic Growth.”

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for convening this important hearing.

I also would like to thank our witnesses, Secretary LaHood, Secretary Donovan, and Administrator Jackson for joining us and for their hard work on these issues.

As we sit in traffic longer, pay more for gas, and watch as scarce farmland is developed, how we manage our cities’ growth and expansion must be both an economic and environmental priority.

I’ve been encouraged by the Administration’s commitment to promoting economic development and affordable housing options that create greener, more sustainable communities.

I’m pleased to see that your agencies are working together on the Sustainable Communities Initiative.

Cities across Ohio are already at the forefront of developing new and innovative ways to make themselves more environmentally friendly, energy efficient, accessible by public transit, and appealing for people of all ages and income levels.

This sort of innovative thinking is particularly important in a manufacturing state like Ohio that has been hard hit by the economic downturn.

The strategic investments that cities like Cleveland, Akron, and Springfield are making now in renewable energy, brownfield redevelopment, and housing rehab will pay off in the future.

These projects will spur development and help create the good-paying jobs in the high-tech and clean energy sector that will utilize the ability of Ohio’s skilled manufacturing workers.

These are jobs that will stay in the state rather than being outsourced abroad. And today, my state needs these stable, good paying jobs more than ever.

In the 1950 census, Cleveland had a population of nearly a million, Cincinnati was over half a million, and 170,000 lived in Youngstown.

Fast forward fifty years and you can see how much things have changed: Cleveland is now less than half its previous size, Cincinnati has lost more than 150,000, and today fewer than 75,000 live in Youngstown.

Despite the population loss, these cities and others like them must maintain an infrastructure for a population they haven't had in over fifty years.

It is important that the initiatives all of you are working on utilize existing infrastructure—this means redeveloping neighborhoods and downtowns, investing in public transit, promoting green infrastructure, and ensuring affordable housing.

In Ohio, one of the most important revitalization projects being discussed is resuming intercity passenger rail service between many of our cities.

Rail in Ohio is essential to connecting the Midwest with the tens of millions living on the eastern seaboard. Proposed corridors will create jobs for Ohio's middle class workers, spur economic development in our communities, reduce the number of cars on the road, and help us achieve environmental goals that make our world more sustainable.

However, it will take more than just investing in passenger rail to achieve the objective of an efficient, more comprehensive rail system. That's why communities—like Columbus and Cincinnati—are looking to expand surface transportation options through light rail and streetcars.

The data on economic development tied to transit is clear and cities in my state are ready to bring their citizens the transit options they want.

Economic and environmental objectives need not be in conflict. Done right, our economic and environmental policies can lead to both sustained economic growth and a cleaner environment.

I look forward to hearing more about how we can capitalize on comprehensive rail and transit strategies to achieve the twin goals of more sustainable communities and job creation.