

Statement of Congressman Rick Larsen (WA)

Chairman Sessions and Ranking Member Slaughter,

Thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony on H.R. 2610, the Transportation, Housing and Urban Development (THUD) appropriations bill for Fiscal Year 2014. I am very concerned about the negative effects that this bill could have on our country's infrastructure investment and I urge you to pass an open rule for its consideration on the House floor.

In May, the collapse of the Interstate 5 bridge over the Skagit River shook my district. This bridge doesn't just connect Burlington and Mount Vernon. It connects the entire West Coast and carries millions of dollars' worth of trade between Canada and the U.S. The bridge collapse harmed local businesses, kept tourism away from the region, and delayed thousands of travelers throughout the West Coast. A similar incident could have a deadly impact. It is clear that more needs to be done to improve our bridges and roadways.

The good news is that we know how to build safe bridges. Thousands of civil engineers devote their lives to building good structures that don't fall down. But we need to pay for them. We need to maintain our bridges until they are old, and then we need to replace them. We can't keep waiting until they crumble into the water below.

This bill does not achieve that goal. It does not contain the \$500 million program included in the Senate THUD bill to immediately fund bridge repair. It maintains level funding for highway and bridge construction and repair at a time when our infrastructure is literally crumbling.

As Ranking Member of the House Aviation Subcommittee, I am also concerned about the severe cuts to the capital budget of the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) in this bill. If enacted into law, the FY14 THUD bill would cut FAA's capital budget by almost \$600 million, beyond the cuts even required by sequestration. This would provide the lowest level of capital funding for FAA since the start of the NextGen program, and the lowest level since 2000.

This morning, the Aviation Subcommittee heard testimony from the Department of Transportation Inspector General that such cuts would prevent FAA from implementing many of the long-term investments it has already made in NextGen air traffic management. Squandering past investments for short-term gain is the wrong direction and I am hopeful that this cut is removed in the final version of the bill.

I am also concerned that this bill does not contain any funding for TIGER grants, which have provided sorely needed funding to pay for transportation improvements for local communities. While the TIGER program can be improved to provide funding to more mid-sized cities, I believe that providing competitive funding for transportation projects ought to be a bipartisan goal.

These serious flaws in the underlying bill require changes, and an open rule would allow members a chance to offer those changes. I urge you to offer an open rule on this bill.