

CONGRESSWOMAN LAURA RICHARDSON (CA37)

**STATEMENT BEFORE THE APPROPRIATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE ON
TRANSPORTATION, HOUSING, AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT**

THURSDAY, APRIL 15, 2010

1:00 P.M.

2358-A RAYBURN

Chairman Olver, thank you for convening this witness request day on the FY2011 Transportation, Housing, and Urban Development Appropriations. I appreciate the opportunity to testify before the Subcommittee.

The 37th Congressional District of California, which I am proud to represent, embodies the nation's transportation needs, with the largest ports in the country, three airports, major freight rail lines, and 40% of the nation's goods moving along our rails and four major interstate highways. And as a member of the Transportation & Infrastructure Committee I understand how sound transportation and infrastructure investments will make our nation globally competitive and enhance the quality of life in our communities.

The President's budget requests a 2% increase in infrastructure funding. This amount is too paltry to permit us to do anything but

tread water when we need to be heavily investing in our nation's infrastructure and moving forward.

With my transportation intensive district there are many projects that are in desperate need of funding and I come before you today to elaborate on just a few of them.

I am requesting \$1.5 million to modify the configuration of the existing interchange of Avalon Boulevard at Interstate 405 (I-405) in the City of Carson. The I-405 is on one of the busiest highways in California and in the country, supporting both local traffic and truck traffic. Over 500,000 cars and trucks use this interchange each day, and these modifications would dramatically help ease congestion in my community from cars backed up trying to get on the highway and help improve overall traffic patterns. The city has obligated the vast majority of the funds for this project and just needs a relatively small amount of federal funding to get the project started.

I am also requesting \$450,000 to purchase three Dash buses that would provide transportation to essential destinations for low-income transit-dependent residents, disabled persons, students, seniors, as well as commuters in the Watts area. The project is part of

the regional system to improve mobility, reduce congestion, and help toward attaining clean-air goals for the region.

I am requesting \$2 million to go towards the replacement of the Gerald Desmond Bridge. The Gerald Desmond Bridge is the de facto trade “highway” gateway to the nation carrying 10% of the nation’s total goods. The I-710/Desmond Bridge is also the primary link to three intermodal rail yards. However the bridge is now reduced to wearing a “diaper” to catch the concrete and debris that falls daily from its underside. It is imperative that we find funding to replace this crumbling transportation link that is so vital to the economic health of our country.

I am also requesting funding for projects such as a new exhibit at the Aquarium of the Pacific which hosts 1.5 million people a year and serves 260,000 schoolchildren and teachers with on- and offsite programs, and for a transit oriented affordable housing development for seniors in my community. And finally I am requesting funding to support the improvement of public infrastructure creating a safer and more walk-able environment along Central Avenue, a very low income in my district that desperately that needs our attention.

Mr. Chairman there are also several programs that I believe need to be robustly funded to meet the needs of my district and people across the country.

The needed for housing and redevelopment assistance is great in my district, my state, and across the nation. California trails only Nevada in the rate of housing foreclosures, and is projected to lose 1.9 million homes to foreclosure projections between 2009 and 2012. Therefore, it is imperative that we substantially increase funding for foreclosure relief programs such as the Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) and the Neighborhood Stabilization Fund (NSF) above the \$4.84 billion requested in the President's budget.

I do not support the President's decision to request a reduction in funding for the Section 202 Housing for the Elderly program and the Section 811 Housing for Persons with Disabilities Program, which funds the new construction of housing for those groups. Our seniors and the disabled are among the most vulnerable populations in society and we cannot neglect their housing needs.

I believe that to help bring our transportation infrastructure to a state of good repair there are several programs that must receive funding increases. We have tragically seen several bridge failures

over the past several years, and report after report have indicated our aging infrastructure needs updating. This is why I am requesting that funding for the Federal Highway Administration's Bridge Program be increased to \$6.5 billion.

I also believe that we must invest more heavily in our transit systems. American's are taking advantage of transit more than ever over the past few years, however budget shortfalls in the States have meant services are being cut back just when they are most needed. This is why I am requesting \$14.9 billion of federal funds be dedicated to our Transit systems.

When it comes to transportation funding, we must be forward-thinking and pro-active to position our country to compete and win in the global economy. Nowhere is this more important than in the area of high-speed rail. As the founding co-chair of the California High-Speed Rail Caucus, I applaud the President for requesting \$1 billion for rail in the budget as this is more than is typically provided. I also appreciate very much the \$2.25 billion grant for high-speed rail development California received under the Recovery Act.

But a larger commitment is needed. It will cost over \$40 billion to bring high-speed rail to California. But with it will come a

revolution in travel and serve as a model for the rest of the country. The benefits include a cleaner and quieter environment, reduced traffic congestion, and 450,000 new jobs in California to build the line. High-speed rail is the wave of the future and we must make a real commitment to it to remain competitive. After all, China is spending an estimated \$100 billion annually to construct its national high-speed rail network. This nation simply cannot afford to fall behind its leading economic competitor in the 21st century. Thus I am requesting \$4 billion be dedicated to funding high-speed rail.

I have several other project and program requests that I have already submitted to the committee and I do not have time to elaborate on all of them at this time. I urge the committee to invest boldly in a wide array of programs to help rebuild our country, provide housing options, and create jobs in these difficult economic times.

Thank you again, Mr. Chairman, for receiving my testimony. I yield back the balance of my time.