Mr. Chairman, I appreciate the gentleman's courtesy in permitting me to speak on this bill, and I do appreciate the hard work that the subcommittee has been grappling with. Clearly, there is not enough money that is allocated to meet all of the varied transportation interests that we have. I also appreciate that this is a dynamic process and that there is going to be probably more give and take on top of the give and take that has occurred.

I would like to speak briefly on behalf of three simple points. First, I heard the chairman talk about the new starts being oversubscribed and talked about how there is more in the pipeline than is likely to be funded at current levels for some time. I agree wholeheartedly, but I would think that that is a signal, a signal about the popularity and the importance of these programs across the country, the way the chairman a moment ago talked about the need for more highway funding because of the need for highways.

We have an extraordinarily popular and important program for communities across the country, including some that may not leap to mind for people thinking about multimodal transportation systems, like in Houston, Texas, where the voters there just this last fall, actually against formidable political opposition, the voters decided that they were going to extend that program. It simply as yet does not keep pace with demand, but we have a broad and growing range of interest around the country.

I would suggest that unlike the highway projects which are basically an entitlement that are not subjected to rigorous analysis in terms of cost-benefit, I know of no projects in the Federal arena in terms of major capital outlay that are subjected to more aggressive cost-benefit analysis than what we do now to the new starts. I think they meet the test. They are in community after community proving to be the most cost-effective ways of reducing congestion, far more effective than spending a similar amount simply widening roads as has been the case in the past. That is why it is popular. That is why it has been supported by Republican and Democratic administrations. That is why we see it in communities large and small across the country.

I am concerned, because I know that there has been some report language that talks about how to deal with the weighing of land-use considerations. I would respectfully suggest that this

is an area that I think the FTA can, in fact, improve its performance; but it is rather, I would suggest, looking at the value of land use rather than to undervalue land-use criteria.

What community after community is finding is that if you do not look at supportive land uses around transportation facilities, without proper land use you can have them be ineffective, you can have a road project that is basically producing congestion the day it is opened if you are not careful with what the land uses are there. We ought to strengthen the land use provisions, not weaken them. That was part of the original ISTEA. That was part of TEA-21. That is part of what is going through the process now if we ever reauthorize the Surface Transportation Act. This is in TEA-LU.

I would hope that we could work with the FTA to balance, to strengthen, to give more of these choices and, frankly, to provide some weight to the economic development potential of these activities. My concern is at the FTA now there is not enough weight for the economic development potential of transportation. I have seen it, and I can give example after example where it has arisen. I would hope that we are able to provide proper weight for it.

The final point that I wanted to raise deals with Amtrak. I am concerned that the Republican leadership, with their Rules Committee, that we have not been able to protect the spending under Amtrak and maybe subject it to a point of order.

This continues an ongoing drama we have here where the administration proposes to undercut it, where there are proposals here in the House to chop it down even further, but it is always restored because it is something the public understands is an essential part of our transportation infrastructure. It is critical in corridors like in the Northeast. It is something that we have historically starved and underfunded. We have spent less in total of Amtrak's entire history than we do in 1 year of highway spending.

I would hope that we not get involved with that charade this time where we go through the motions of cutting Amtrak funding or even eliminating it, because the American public will not stand for it. It will ultimately be reinstated, but it undercuts the effective administration that we see with the new director, Peter Gunn, who is the best I have seen since I have been in Congress. They deserve better and so does the rail passenger public.