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VIA ELECTRONIC FILING

Ms. Gina Filosa, U.S. DOT Volpe Center  
U.S. Department of Transportation Docket Operations  
West Building 5<sup>th</sup> Floor, Room W58-213  
1200 New Jersey Ave SE,  
Washington DC 20590

**Re: U.S. DOT Transportation Research and Development Strategic Plan (Docket No.: DOT-OST-2025-2085)**

On behalf of our more than 8,000 members in the transportation construction industry, the American Road & Transportation Builders Association (ARTBA) respectfully offers the following comments on the U.S. Department of Transportation's (U.S. DOT) request for information on the Transportation Research and Development Strategic Plan. We welcome the opportunity to provide feedback on this important initiative, which will help shape future research priorities and efficient delivery of transportation infrastructure.

### **Background**

ARTBA's membership includes representation from all components of the transportation construction industry, including leading universities involved in transportation research as well as contractors, planning and design firms, materials suppliers, equipment manufacturers and state departments of transportation. Our association draws on this breadth of perspectives to develop consensus policy positions. We actively engage with U.S. DOT and other federal agencies to advance priorities that support the safe, cost-effective, and timely delivery of transportation improvements.

ARTBA's Research and Education division consists of leading university engineering professors and transportation researchers and educators who work closely together with various federal transportation agencies to implement transportation policy provisions, including research initiatives.

According to the request for information, U.S. DOT seeks public comments to inform the development of the agency's Research, Development, and Technology (RD&T) Strategic Plan for fiscal years (FY) 2026-2030. ARTBA appreciates the opportunity to offer comments and feedback on the questions posed below by the agency.

### **ARTBA's Comments on the Request for Information**

- 1. How should DOT prioritize and invest in research activities over the next five years? Over the next 25 years?**

ARTBA believes future research supported by U.S. DOT should be balanced among conceptual, basic, and applied initiatives. Programs that enable the nation to stay ahead of the innovation curve are essential – such as the Advanced Research Projects Agency-Infrastructure program. At the same time, these initiatives should be balanced with efforts to research, develop, and implement applied technologies and advancements that practitioners can use in the field during the near term.

**2. What types of research activities should DOT undertake to meet its strategic goals?**

More open-ended research in existing and emerging programs established by U.S. DOT could facilitate new breakthroughs. There is no better place to nurture innovation than in the inherently creative environment of universities and other educational institutions. The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) established the open research initiative pilot program, which allows institutions to submit unsolicited research proposals. ARTBA recommends implementing this program and incorporating it into U.S. DOT’s next strategic plan.

**3. What key social, demographic, economic, technological, and/or other trends influence transportation today and into the future?**

U.S. DOT should consider studying the impact of fuel efficiency, population changes, and other key factors on user-fee related revenues going into the Highway Trust Fund. Such research would improve understanding of long-term revenue trends and their implications for infrastructure investment planning.

**4. What emerging challenges or opportunities or knowledge gaps in transportation warrant additional DOT RD&T activities or investments?**

ARTBA strongly suggests that research on Work Zone Safety continue to be a priority for U.S. DOT, given the importance of improving worker and road user protection through enhanced training, best practices, and safety innovations.

**5. How can DOT best lead and coordinate its RD&T activities with Federal, State, local, tribal and territorial governments, the private sector, non-profit institutions, and international partners?**

U.S. DOT should prioritize disseminating relevant research technologies to the broader transportation community and support technology transfer and feedback from stakeholders. Additionally, U.S. DOT should determine which issues are mode specific, such as longer lasting pavements, versus those that are cross-cutting, such as cybersecurity and use of digital technologies. Cross-cutting issues are best addressed through coordinated inter-modal agency efforts, increasing efficiency and cost effectiveness.

The relationship among universities, research programs, and industry partners can serve as the foundation for future research and information-sharing. Providing resources to universities and other such groups to coordinate stakeholder engagement would ensure U.S. DOT is receiving a range of perspectives.

**6. How can DOT best use its research portfolio to develop national standards that can drive interoperability across the multimodal transportation system?**

U.S. DOT’s plan could include working with relevant stakeholder groups to ensure national standards are as comprehensive as possible and that they avoid state by state disparities, which ultimately raise costs.

**7. What activities should DOT adopt to facilitate deployment of DOT research results into the U.S. transportation system?**

Research and technology can help transform project delivery by enhancing productivity, collaboration, and cost-effectiveness. For example, the use of the Local Technical Assistance Programs is one way to bring the latest technology to local agencies that do not have the same resources as a state Department of Transportation. U.S. DOT should consider providing additional funds for pilot tests involving industry and public stakeholders to explore the implementation and adoption of technologies. An important part of this process would be developing guidance for the design for the pilot tests and providing adequate funding.

ARTBA believes that U.S. DOT has a role in helping to accelerate the adoption of digital construction through increased funding for Advanced Digital Construction Management Systems grants. A parallel program could incentivize states to deploy these technologies in other areas, like work zone safety.

**8. Is there anything else you want to share or say regarding DOT's research portfolio and activities?**

ARTBA believes that future research initiatives should allow for the sharing and processing of negative outcomes. The research community believes there is value and information that can be shared from projects where the results diverged from initial intentions or expectations. These results can enhance the learning process and provide insights to U.S. DOT and the research community.

**Conclusion**

ARTBA looks forward to continued collaboration with U.S. DOT, state and local transportation agencies, and industry partners to strengthen and modernize the nation's transportation infrastructure. A forward-looking research, development, and technology program is essential to advancing innovation, improving project delivery, and ensuring long-term system performance.

We encourage the agency to reflect the principles outlined above in its RD&T Strategic Plan and stand ready to assist as the plan is developed and implemented. Please contact Dr. Alison Black at [ablack@artba.org](mailto:ablack@artba.org) or Prianka Sharma at [psharma@artba.org](mailto:psharma@artba.org) with any questions or for additional information.

Sincerely,

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