

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

ARTBA COMMENTS: USDOT RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIC PLAN

February 12, 2026

OVERVIEW

U.S. DOT is developing its Research, Development, and Technology Strategic Plan for fiscal years 2026 to 2030, which will guide federal transportation research priorities and investments. ARTBA submitted comments urging the agency to balance long-term innovation with near-term, deployable solutions that improve project delivery and system performance.

Key Priorities Identified

- **Balanced research portfolio.**

Maintain a mix of advanced, basic, and applied research alongside deployable technologies for near-term use.

- **Open research initiatives.**

Implement and expand the IIJA open research pilot program to encourage unsolicited proposals from universities and industry.

- **Highway Trust Fund trends research.**

DOT should study how fuel efficiency and demographic changes are affecting user-fee revenues to better inform long-term infrastructure funding decisions.

- **Work zone safety focus.**

Continued investment in work zone safety research is critical to improving protection for both workers and the traveling public.

- **Technology deployment and digital construction.**

DOT should strengthen technology transfer, expand pilot program funding, and increase support for Advanced Digital Construction Management Systems to accelerate adoption in the field.

ARTBA's Recommendation

Incorporate these priorities into the FY 2026 to 2030 RD&T Strategic Plan and continue close collaboration with industry stakeholders.