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SOUTH CAROLINA  
CHAMBER of COMMERCE

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## **S.C. Chamber President Ted Pitts Testifies On Need To Reform DOT**

**COLUMBIA, S.C.** – South Carolina Chamber of Commerce President Ted Pitts today testified before the House Legislative Oversight Committee about the need to reform the DOT as it relates to a comprehensive infrastructure strategy. Excerpts below:

### **Ted Pitts, SC Chamber President Testimony At House Oversight Committee**

“This is an important effort that you’re doing. Legislative Oversight is important and specifically DOT and transportation is something that’s really important to the business community. First, we can’t open without recognizing the good work of the DOT. We had a winter storm a couple years ago, we had the flood this past year, and the work that they’ve done is admirable the business community recognizes that.

“When the business community talks about DOT and infrastructure, they talk about accountability and transparency. Act 114 has brought some transparency and accountability to the DOT in the process, but what the business community would also say is that the governance model, or the structure of the agency, doesn’t seem to make sense...

“We want to praise the House, because in your bill that you passed early last year and sent to the Senate, you set up an accountable system that has the commission and the agency accountable to one elected official, the state’s Chief Executive, the Governor. We feel like that is a great step in the right direction. It would continue to build trust and accountability with the voters of South Carolina. So we want to thank the House, Speaker Lucas, Gary Simrill and all of you for your efforts on that front, we think it’s important going forward.

“When we look at accountability and transparency, one thing that’s really just of interest is that we talk about revenue and the additional funds that you put on infrastructure, and we appreciate that, but if you look at where those allocations have actually gone, the highlight of transformation in 2006 with Act 114 was this prioritization list, which has become a model for some other states and is held as a true way to get politics out of the road process. But the lion’s share of the money that the General Assembly has allocated (the “new” money) has gone to entities that don’t have to follow that prioritization list.

“So when you look at the State Transportation Infrastructure Bank (STIB), by a simple majority vote they adopted them on this last allocation that you gave them, but by and large, the prioritization process that is

important for transparency and accountability is not required to be followed by statute. So the South Carolina Chamber has said this is something that needs to be required.

“Additionally, last year a lot of money was sent to local governments. Can anybody tell me what process local governments have to follow for a prioritization process? It may be different in each county. So we would ask that you look at that as you look at what you’re doing going forward...

“From a DOT internal perspective, leadership is key. Christy Hall, we think, is a good, strong leader, and she will continue to address problems. You have the legislative audit council report that will come out and it will highlight things that need to be fixed. I think that process is good to marry with this process to make sure those items get fixed. But if you do an audit of any agency you’re going to find things that should be done differently. I think the key is to make sure those things are addressed.

“The thing that we would ask that you look at is that you look at transportation as a whole. I know this is a DOT exercise, but we would ask that you look at transportation as a whole when we talk about needs in this state. We have 1600 substandard bridges, 822 structurally deficient bridges which products have to reroute around, and by and large cost businesses money, that we need to address.”

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